

## From the Editor

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# The impact factor: The ubiquitous metric in evaluating scientific journals

I've been the Editor-in-Chief of *WORK* for over 34 years. During this time there have been ongoing discussions about the topic of the Journal Impact Factor (IF) among other journal editors, authors as well as publishers especially about its role in evaluating scientific journals.

I became determined to better understand IFs by starting with some historical information. In 1955, the concept of an IF was introduced by Eugene Garfield, an American linguist and information scientist who was the founder of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) [1, 2]. Garfield envisioned the IF as a tool to help librarians make knowledgeable decisions about which journals to purchase for their institutions. He designed the IF as the ratio of the number of citations in the current year to items published in the journal in the previous two years, divided by the number of substantive articles and reviews published in the same two years. Presently, an IF is calculated in a similar manner by dividing the number of times articles in a journal that are cited in a specific year by the number of citable items published in the previous two years. For example, an IF of 3 means that the average number of times all citable articles published in the previous two years were cited is three.

Let's go back to the history of the IF. It wasn't until 1963 that the IF gained prominence. Garfield, now working with Irving H. Sher at ISI, decided that the IF would assist in the selection of journals for the Science Citation Index (SCI). In 1975, the IF was formally introduced with the publication of Journal Citation Reports [3, 4].

I want to underscore that the IF was not originally intended to be a measure of a journal's quality, influ-

ence or importance. However, over time, it became widely embraced as a metric for evaluating journals, researchers, and institutions of higher education. In many academicians' promotion and tenure review, the IF of the journals in which they have published their work is taken into high consideration.

It's important to share that Garfield cautioned against the misuse of the IF by stressing that it should not be used as the sole criterion for evaluating research or researchers. This was a wise statement as the IF doesn't necessarily reflect the quality of individual papers or researchers, nor does it account for differences between scientific fields [5]. I highly recommend reading the paper, "The impact-factors debate: the ISI's uses and limits" by Moed for more details of the challenges of the IF [5].

*WORK*'s new IF is 1.7 (from 2.3) and CiteScore is 3.0 (from 2.6). Although the IF dropped slightly, this downward trend is in line with broader trends across this year's IFs across journals. Over the last two years, IFs were anomalously high due to a spike in the publication of research output driven by the sudden appearance of COVID-19 and the inclusion of early access content in the IF calculation. Clarivate has published a blog about this year's IFs for more information: <https://clarivate.com/blog/journal-citation-reports-2024-simplifying-journal-evaluation/>.

It is important to emphasize that these metrics merely represent a single perspective in the valuation of *WORK*. The journal has and continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the global understanding of the concept of "work." It is propelling this domain of knowledge forward through the publication of research findings, insights from clinical practice, and comprehensive systematic reviews among other type

of papers. This endeavor contributes significantly to the discourse on work at a global level. My gratitude is extended to our editorial board, authors, external reviewers, the editor's assistant and Axana with IOS Press/Sage for their commitment to the highest quality of publications in *WORK*.

This issue of *WORK* contains 40 papers including a Sounding Board editorial titled, *Promoting the value of good work – an important role for occupational professionals in a post-pandemic world?* by Dr. Leon Straker.

The Editor's Choice article is *Factors influencing employers' support for employees with acquired brain injuries or mental illness to stay in work: A systematic review* authored by Craven, Perez, Holmes, Fisher and Radford. Their systematic review concluded that persons with acquired brain injuries (with and without co-morbid mental illness) and their employers may benefit from specialist support and resources to guide them through the return-to-work process.

I hope you are enjoying our *Learn at WORK* podcast episodes. I am delighted to share that Kristelle Craven will be a guest on the podcast for the September episode.

Learn more about *WORK* on our website: [workjournal.org](http://workjournal.org). I always welcome hearing from you, so please reach out.

All my best,  
*Karen Jacobs*

Founding Editor, *WORK*  
Occupational therapist & ergonomist  
E-mail: [kjacob@bu.edu](mailto:kjacobs@bu.edu).  
[blogs.bu.edu/kjacobs/](http://blogs.bu.edu/kjacobs/)

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