

Guest Editorial

Message From Editor-in-Chief

THIS volume of the IEEE JOURNAL OF SELECTED TOPICS IN APPLIED EARTH OBSERVATIONS AND REMOTE SENSING (J-STARS) marks a new milestone as J-STARS has become a gold fully open-access (OA) journal since January 1, 2020. The IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Society made the decision of this OA flip following the requirement of IEEE that each society should have at least one fully OA journal. J-STARS is one of the first conventional journals to flip to OA, and the lessons we learned from this experience can be shared with other conventional journals that are prepared to flip. The flipped J-STARS is more appealing than a brand-new OA journal thanks to its existing journal impact factor accumulated since its original establishment in 2008.

J-STARS is committed to continue the publications of high-quality research articles on remote sensing techniques and applications related to earth observations with the same rigorous peer-review process. It is also a unique venue for special issue publications. J-STARS as an OA journal has no annual limit on the number of special issues that can be published any more. “Special issues” are now replaced by “special sections.” Currently, about 35% of published papers are special issue/section papers, and this percentage is expected to increase greatly in the near future.

The performance of J-STARS has been stable with growth since my tenure in 2016. The journal quality metrics, such as impact factor and article influence score, have been improved, as shown in Fig. 1. At the same time, it has been facing challenges, especially strong competitions from other remote sensing journals, in particular, OA journals. As shown in Fig. 2, the number of original paper submissions has not increased since 2016, although the decrease in 2019 was partial due to the fact that the submission deadline of IGARSS 2019 special issue (which is a traditional IGARSS special issue series) was postponed to 2020. Fig. 3 shows the number of published papers each year, which was about 400–500 papers annually in 2016–2019.

OA is one of the most widely discussed topics in academic publication today. The main focus of the OA movement is peer-reviewed research literature [1]. Two features define an OA publication: the published contents are freely accessible through the Internet, and readers are given copyright permissions to republish or reuse the contents as long as the authors and publishers receive proper attributions [2], [3]. By providing immediate and unrestricted access to the latest research, OA journals accelerate scientific discoveries and create a more equitable system of knowledge. Publishing in an OA journal enables a valuable research to reach a wider audience and to have a

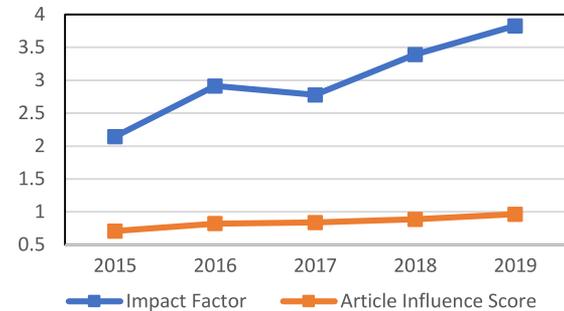


Fig. 1. Impact factor and article influence score of J-STARS in 2015–2019.

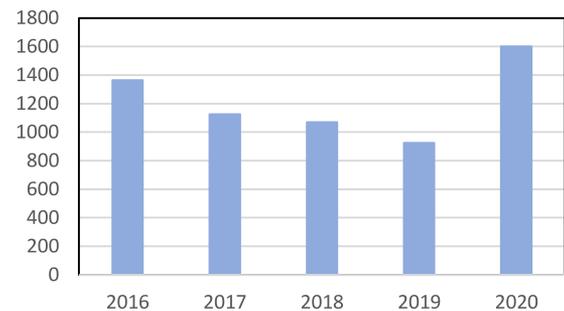


Fig. 2. Number of papers submitted of J-STARS in 2016–2020.

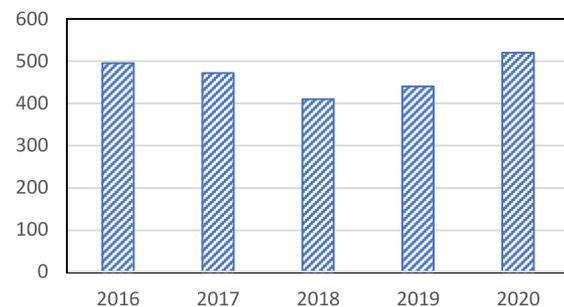


Fig. 3. Number of papers published in J-STARS in 2016–2020.

greater impact. In 2009, there were approximately 4800 active OA journals, publishing around 190,000 articles [4]. As of December 2020, over 15,600 OA journals publishing more than 5,460,000 articles are listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals [5]. This trend explains the success of J-STARS’ OA flip, which can be demonstrated by the projected 30% increase in annual submission (see Fig. 2) and 15% increase in publication (see Fig. 3) in 2020.

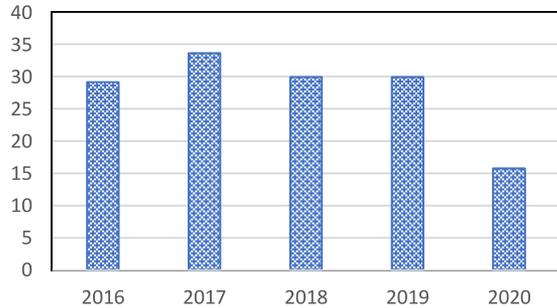


Fig. 4. Median weeks of accepted papers from submission-to-ePublication in J-STARS in 2016–2020.

However, OA journals are often misunderstood to have lower qualities than their subscription counterparts, which may be due to the emergence of “predatory” or fraudulent journals. Maintaining a rigorous peer-review process is critical. At the same time, expediting the review process is also important for promoting the best practice of OA. Thus, we must carefully consider the balance between rigor and speed of review. Currently, J-STARS has reduced the time for major revisions from eight weeks to four weeks, and for minor revisions from four weeks to two weeks; meanwhile, reviewers are given two weeks for evaluations rather than three weeks as they have been in the past. As shown in Fig. 4, the median weeks from submission to online post have been reduced from 30 weeks to 16 weeks. This

is a reasonable timeframe for J-STARS to achieve the balance between journal quality and a fast review process.

This volume also concludes my duty as the EiC of J-STARS. I am glad to have this capacity to serve the IEEE and remote sensing community in the past five years. I am also grateful to our associate editors, guest editors, reviewers, and authors for their supports. Certainly, the journal’s success is built on the efforts of my predecessors. I am confident that under the leadership of my successors, J-STARS will continue to thrive in the OA era.

QIAN DU, *Fellow, IEEE*
 Department of Electrical and
 Computer Engineering
 Mississippi State University
 Starkville, MS, USA
 du@ece.msstate.edu

REFERENCES

- [1] A. Swan, *Policy Guidelines for the Development and Promotion of Open Access*. Paris, France: UNESCO, 2012.
- [2] M. W. Carroll, “Why full open access matters,” *PLoS Biol.*, vol. 9, no. 11, 2011, Art. no. e1001210.
- [3] P. Suber, “Open access overview,” 2015. [Online]. Available: <https://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm>
- [4] B.-C. Björk, “A study of innovative features in scholarly open access journals,” *J. Med. Internet Res.*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2011, Art. no. e115.
- [5] Directory of Open Access Journals, 2020. [Online]. Available: <https://doaj.org/>



Qian Du (Fellow, IEEE) received the Ph.D. degree in electrical engineering from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Baltimore, MD, USA, in 2000.

She is currently the Bobby Shackouls Professor with the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS, USA. Her research interests include hyperspectral remote sensing image analysis and applications, pattern classification, data compression, and neural networks.

Dr. Du was the Co-Chair of the Data Fusion Technical Committee of the IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Society from 2009 to 2013 and the Chair of the Remote Sensing and Mapping Technical Committee of the International Association for Pattern Recognition from 2010 to 2014. She has served as an Associate Editor for the IEEE JOURNAL OF SELECTED TOPICS IN APPLIED EARTH OBSERVATIONS AND REMOTE SENSING, *Journal of Applied Remote Sensing*, and *IEEE Signal Processing Letters*. From 2016 to 2020, she is the Editor-in-Chief for the IEEE JOURNAL OF SELECTED TOPICS IN APPLIED EARTH OBSERVATIONS AND REMOTE SENSING. She currently

serves on the IEEE Periodicals Review and Advisory Committee. She is a Fellow of the SPIE—International Society for Optics and Photonics.