

## EDITORIAL: LESSONS LEARNED FROM OUR DISCIPLINE, AND MORE EFFECTIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AT *THE INDUSTRIAL GEOGRAPHER*

Industrial geographers have long been interested in the manufacturing processes employed by the firms we study. We know well that change in the way in which industrial activities are organized can have a real and substantial impact on the firms and communities involved. For example, the introduction of “just-in-time” processes (Rubenstein 1986) to the North American automobile sector had profound implications for everyone connected to the industry. Although the long-run consequences of the heightened competition heralded by new production methodologies have included no small measure of pain for North America’s “Big Three”, most industrial geographers would agree that the global auto sector has become more efficient and now produces a much higher-quality product than at any time in the past. Change has been good for the automotive industry, even if the same cannot be said for every one of its constituent firms.

While we’re hoping to not stretch a metaphor beyond advisable limits, the editors of *The Industrial Geographer* would like to announce some process-based changes that in some ways parallel the thinking behind “just-in-time” production. Effective with Volume 7 (2010), the *IG* will switch to what we might term “just-in-time” publishing, in an attempt to make our already-speedy

production process even more efficient. We believe that both our authors and our readers should benefit from this move.

Under our new procedure, articles will appear on the journal’s website within a target time of *one month after final acceptance*. Making this change, in many ways, is simply a matter of taking advantage of the inherent flexibility provided by our web publishing technology. Our readers will now have a reason to visit the *IG* site for new content more often throughout the year.

With this development, our goal is to keep initial review times unchanged from previous years, with a target of returning reviewer comments *six to eight weeks after manuscript submission*. However, publication times should still decrease, as articles will not have to wait for our previous, twice-per-year publication schedule. We hope this rapid turn-around will prove helpful to prospective authors.

Outside of shorter times to publication, another primary benefit that we would like to build through this change is the possibility of a degree of *immediacy in debate and exchange* that simply cannot be achieved by journals constrained to a costly and relatively inflexible hardcopy publishing schedule. There is a real opportunity here to build interesting discussions around the topics we publish.

Of course, how this flexibility ends up being used is up to our readers and contributors in the industrial geography research community. We invite the submission of commentaries and follow-up analysis related to previously-published articles. We challenge our readers to examine the current issue for points amenable to reply or further discussion in the weeks ahead.

One final element is worth mentioning: even though we will publish articles as accepted during the year, our goal is to maintain at least two issues per annual volume. Articles published from January through June will generally appear in issue 1, with July through December articles comprising issue 2. As well, in maintaining distinct issues within a volume, we would like to continue to provide the possibility for researchers to organize special theme issues, in which a set of related articles could appear together in a collection. We invite special theme proposals for collections of anywhere from two to six papers.

In conclusion, a real and ongoing need exists for research that provides an empirical and applied perspective on the many phenomena we find interesting as industrial geographers. Our hope is that perhaps the research published here might in turn provide the inspiration for the next “just-in-time” breakthrough for our beleaguered automobile industry.

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## Postscript

This issue includes a tribute to Alan MacPherson, a prolific contributor to industrial geography and good friend to many in the field, who passed away earlier this year. We will all miss him.

## References

Rubenstein, J.M. 1986. Changing distribution of the American automobile industry. *Geographical Review* 76: 288-300.