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A Historical and Demographic Account of 15 years and Publications in *Research in the Schools*

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Since 1993, Research in the Schools (RITS) has been a journal that disseminates educational research through the mid-southern states and beyond. In this editorial, we review the history and the publication process of RITS. Further, we describe the expanded author log wherein every methodological, grammatical, APA, and reference list error of commission and omission was recorded and analyzed. The author log also documents the topic, genre, number of authors per manuscript, gender of primary author, and geographical location of primary author affiliation (e.g., states of residence and university affiliations) for manuscripts submitted for review. Finally, we highlight the special issues, present a citation analysis, specify databases to which RITS subscribes, and display the geographical locations of editorial board members.

What makes a journal conceptually, methodologically, and philosophically appealing? The answer to this question may be embodied through the history of *Research in the Schools* (*RITS*) from its inception to its vision. A publication of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (MSERA), *RITS* originated in 1994 and included an editorial board of national, international, and graduate student members (McLean & Kaufman, 2003). Presently co-sponsored by MSERA and Sam Houston State University, *RITS* continues as a nationally and internationally refereed journal. True to the mission of the founding editorial board, *RITS* features original contributions from authors to include: (a) research in practice; (b) topical articles; (c) methods and techniques; (d) assessment; (e) educational policy, reform, and accountability; and (f) other topics of interest to educational researchers. The overall goal of *RITS* (*RITS*, 2009) aligns with the overall goal of MSERA (MSERA, n.d.): to encourage and provide results of quality educational research in schools encompassing elementary schools, secondary schools, and institutions of higher learning.

At the journal's inception in 1994 and co-editing with Alan Kaufman, James McLean interviewed "the father of educational evaluation," Ralph W. Tyler, who affirmed editors to

> …select your articles and papers based on problems that really exist, not to depend on papers written at a desk at home, but to go out and work with schools, get to understand the situations there thoroughly, and begin to say what the problems really are. (McLean, 1994, p. 8)

In 2004, *RITS* entered its 2nd decade as an outlet for research that spans *all* educational settings including preschools, public and private schools, universities, continuing education classes for adults, and adaptive skills courses. Editors Larry G. Daniel and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie restated the vision for RITS and reiterated a "commitment to the importance of the reporting of measures of practical significance (e.g., effect size), clinical significance, and/or economic significance" (Daniel & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 1).

Published twice yearly and including the current issue, *RITS* consists of both empirical and nonempirical articles for 16 volumes representing 32 issues. In its year of inception, authors submitting articles for review to *RITS* adhered to guidelines set forth in the fourth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (American Psychological Association [APA], 1994), hereafter called the *Publication Manual*. Subsequently, author guidelines for submitting to *RITS* underwent two additional editions of the *Publication Manual*: the fifth edition (APA, 2001)

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and the recent transition to the sixth edition (APA, 2010) on January 1, 2010. In the latest issue, Volume 16 and Issue 2, the editorial team is celebrating the publication of *RITS*' 250th article. Specifically, across the 16 volumes, the number of articles published in *RITS* has ranged from 6 to 10 (M = 7.91, SD = 1.20), yielding a total of 253 articles.

The day-to-day efforts for a journal involve numerous talented individuals. Working closely with editors, editorial assistants manage author submissions, the double-blinded review process, production/distribution of the journal, as well as daily correspondences through emails. Editorial assistants over the years have been Margaret Rice, Anna Williams, Michele Jarrell, Cindy Jacobs, Claribel Torres, Janene Hemmen, and Rebecca Frels, respectively. Formerly, editorial assistants received authors' article submissions through means of the U.S. postal services and thereafter through email attachments. Recently, in 2009, and through the efforts of editorial assistant Janene Hemmen, the double-blinded review process and authors' article submissions after internal review began being electronically managed through the online Express Academic Services of FastTrack.

As a result of a prolific editorial board, five dedicated editors, and seven excellent editorial assistants/production editors, and the support of MSERA over the last 15 years, the level of rigor exemplified in the review process has been and continues to be unprecedented. For example, over the last 6 years, a large database of the majority of articles submitted to *RITS* has been maintained wherein *every* methodological, grammatical, APA, and reference list error of commission and omission is recorded. This database has resulted in evidence-based articles (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2009) and editorials (Daniel & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Hahs-Vaughn & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Hahs-Vaughn, Onwuegbuzie, & Slate, 2009; Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2005; Onwuegbuzie, Slate, Combs, & Frels, 2009) that are aimed at providing authors with guidance for improving their manuscripts and, hence, increase the probability of their manuscripts being accepted for publication in *RITS* or other journals. In these articles, errors were identified that predict whether or not a manuscript will be rejected. Indeed, no other journal editors routinely provide this level of evidence-based guidelines for authors.

The daily maintenance and production of *RITS* includes a detailed author manuscript log that chronicles every submitted manuscript—noting authors, affiliations, titles, and other information important for tracking articles from submission to possible publication. The expanded author manuscript log consists of data for exploring the diverse breadth of *RITS*, including topic, genre, number of authors per manuscript, gender of primary author, and geographical location of primary author affiliation (e.g., states of residence and university affiliations). Thus, the expanded author manuscript log reveals that for 64% of the manuscripts submitted to *RITS* over the last 6 years, the first author has been female. This percentage likely reflects the fact that the vast majority of faculty in the field of education is female (National Education Association, 2009). Indeed, the percentage of female educators (75.8% in the year 2000) has been increasing over the decades (68% in 1940) and continues to rise (National Education Association, 2009).

Noted in the expanded author log is the Carnegie Classification (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, n.d.) adopted by the higher educational research community to describe primary authors' academic institutions. Primary authors submitting articles for review to *RITS* were affiliated with institutions as follows: institutions with very high research (17.6%), institutions with high research (27.9%), institutions with doctoral-level research (13.2%), and institutions wherein research is not classified (41.2%). These institutions have ranged in student size from 1,146 to 44,435 (M = 16,311.82, SD = 10,015.25). The number of authors per manuscripts submitted to *RITS* have ranged from 1 to 9 (M = 2.13, SD = 1.26). Interestingly, manuscripts in which the first author was female (M = 2.10, SD = 1.30) have had statistically significantly fewer co-authors than have manuscripts in which the first author was male (M = 2.50, SD = 1.34), with a small-to-moderate effect size of 0.31, using Cohen's (1988) criteria. Also, female lead authors statistically significantly have resided in smaller institutions (M = 15,187.52, SD = 9,288.43) than have male lead authors (M = 19,150.66, SD = 1,841.05), with a small-to-moderate effect size of 0.37 (Cohen, 1988).

With regard to the genre of a manuscript, slightly more than one half of the manuscripts (53.7%) have represented quantitative empirical research studies, 19.5% have represented qualitative empirical research studies, 16.3% have represented mixed research studies, and 10.6% have represented conceptually, theoretically, or methodologically based manuscripts or reviews of literature. Hence, the current editors of *RITS* encourage more submissions of qualitative and mixed research manuscripts. With respect to the latter genre, authors might refer to the special issue on mixed methods that was published in the spring 2006 issue, which was guest-edited by R. Burke Johnson (Johnson, 2006). No statistically significant relationship was present between the gender of the lead author and the genre of the manuscript ($\chi^2[3] = 1.58$, $p > .05$). Also, no

statistically significant relationship was present between the genre of the manuscript and whether or not the manuscript is rejected ($\chi^2[3] = 4.19$, $p > .05$). This latter finding is encouraging because it reveals that the editors of *RITS* are not more likely to publish any particular genre of manuscript.

The number of pages of manuscripts reviewed have ranged from 9 to 48 (M = 27.96, SD = 9.04). Further, 17.6% of manuscripts have been less than 20 pages in length, 62.2% of manuscripts have been less than 30 pages in length, and 89.2% of manuscripts have been less than 40 pages in length. However, no statistically significant difference was yielded in the number of manuscript pages between manuscripts whose first author was female (M = 27.18, SD = 9.58) and manuscripts whose first author was male (M = 29.82, SD = 9.07). Manuscripts rejected for publication (M = 26.42, SD = 9.07) have been statistically significantly shorter than have manuscripts accepted for publication (M = 31.86, SD = 7.91), with a medium-to-large effect size of 0.62. This finding likely reflects the fact that manuscripts that were too short might have been more likely to contain errors of omission and/or to contain one or more underdeveloped sections—for example, manuscripts with underdeveloped literature reviews are more than six times more likely to be rejected (Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2005). Thus, authors might consider utilizing the evidence-based guidelines of Onwuegbuzie and Daniel (2005), Daniel and Onwuegbuzie (2007), Hahs-Vaughn et al. (2009), and Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009). Although manuscripts rejected for publication (M = 2.50, SD = 1.67) have involved more authors than have manuscripts accepted for publication (M = 1.98, SD = 1.05), this difference was not statistically significant.

Since 2004, the acceptance rate for *RITS* each year has ranged from 12.5% to 36.4%, with a mean acceptance rate of 26.6% (SD = 9.72%). This mean acceptance rate is statistically significantly lower than is the mean acceptance rate of 37.5% among approximately 50 prominent education journals as documented by Henson (2005)—a further indication of the quality of *RITS*. Even more compelling for the MSERA community is the impact of *RITS* articles for the academic community as a whole. A citation analyses was conducted utilizing Harzing's (2009) *Publish or Perish* software and Google Scholar; it was concluded that 148 *RITS* articles in Google Scholar within the last 15 years were cited 838 times, yielding 55.87 citations per year and 5.66 citations per paper. Further, the *h*-index, which provides a measure of sustained impact (Hirsch, 2005), for *RITS* is 15. Thus, at least 15 articles that have been published in *RITS* have been cited at least 15 times. The most cited *RITS* articles recognized in this *h*-index are presented in Table 1.

As seen in Table 1, Daniel's (1998) article published in the special issue on statistical significance testing has been the most cited *RITS* article to date with at least 53 citations, followed closely by McLean and Ernest's (1998) article from the same special issue with at least 52 citations. Nix and Barnette's (1998) article from this special issue has been cited in at least 50 articles. The fact that the three most cited articles (155 citations combined) have been published in the special issue on statistical significance testing demonstrates the impact of this special issue (i.e., Volume 5 Issue 2). Onwuegbuzie's (2003) article on internal and external validity has been the next most cited article, with at least 44 citations. The articles by Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006), Teddlie and Tashakkori (2006), Yin (2006), and Bazeley (2006), and Sandelowski, Voils, and Barroso (2006)—all from the special issue on mixed methods—have had at least 39, 38, 22, 18, and 15 citations, respectively—also demonstrating the success of this special issue (i.e., Volume 10 Issue 1). The fact that 8 of the 15 most cited articles have been published in special issues provides compelling evidence regarding the impact of special issues published in *RITS* in the academic community. As such, the editors of *RITS* plan to continue the publication of special issues. Furthermore, the citation rates of *RITS* articles are particularly impressive due to the fact that that *RITS* has been indexed by PROQUEST, ERIC, and EBSCO for less than 2 years. Currently, *RITS* is accessible through an increasing number of databases (e.g., google scholar); thus, the citation rate of *RITS* should increase substantially—yielding greater national and international visibility.

Even though MSERA represents the six states of Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee, the readership, manuscript authors, and editorial board members reside beyond the geographic region of the mid-south. Replicating the board in 1994, the current editorial board members of *RITS* include both regular board members and student board members. As depicted in Figure 1 (National Weather Service, 1999), members reside primarily in MSERA member states, yet also in other states, and outside the US.

Table 1

The Most Cited RITS Articles that Contribute to the h-Index of 15

Minimum no. of citations	Article
53	Daniel, L. G. (1998). Statistical significance testing: A historical overview of misuse and misinterpretation with implications for editorial policies of educational journals. *Research in the Schools, 5*(2), 23-32.
52	McLean, J. E., & Ernest, J. M. (1998). The role of statistical significance testing in educational research. *Research in the Schools, 5*(2), 15-22.
50	Nix, T. W., & Barnette, J. J. (1998). The data analysis dilemma: Ban or abandon. A review of null hypothesis significance testing. *Research in the Schools, 5*(2), 3-14.
44	Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2003). Expanding the framework of internal and external validity in quantitative research. *Research in the Schools, 10*(1), 71-89.
39	Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Johnson, R. B. (2006). The validity issue in mixed research. *Research in the Schools, 13*(1), 48-63.
38	Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2006). A general typology of research designs featuring mixed methods. *Research in the Schools, 13*(1), 12-28.
28	Witcher, A. E., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Minor, L. C. (2001). Characteristics of effective teachers: Perceptions of preservice teachers. *Research in the Schools, 8*(2), 45-57.
26	Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Slate, J. R., Paterson, F. R. A., Watson, M. H., & Schwartz, R. A. (2000). Factors associated with achievement in educational research courses. *Research in the Schools, 7*(1), 53-65.
22	Yin, R. K. (2006). Mixed methods research: Are the methods genuinely integrated or merely parallel? *Research in the Schools, 13*(1), 41-47.
18	Kieffer, K. M. (1999). An introductory primer on the appropriate use of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. *Research in the Schools, 6*(2), 75-92.
18	Bazeley, P. (2006). The contribution of computer software to integrating qualitative and quantitative data analyses. *Research in the Schools, 13*(1), 64-74.
18	Achilles, C. M., Harman, P., & Egelson, P. (1995). Using research results on class size to improve pupil achievement outcomes. *Research in the Schools, 2*(2), 23-30.
17	Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (1998). Statistics anxiety: A function of learning style? *Research in the Schools, 5*(1), 43-52.
17	Lammers, W. J., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Slate, J. R. (2001). Academic success as a function of the gender, class, age, study habits, and employment of college students. *Research in the Schools, 8*(2), 71-81.
17	Jones, C. H., Slate, J. R., & Marini, I. (1995). Locus of control, social interdependence, academic preparation, age, study time, and study skills of college students. *Research in the Schools, 2*(1), 55-62.
15	Diamond, P. J., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2001). Factors associated with reading achievement and attitude among elementary school-aged students. *Research in the Schools, 8*(1), 1-11.
15	Sandelowski, M., Voils, C. I., & Barroso, J. (2006). Defining and designing mixed methods research synthesis studies. *Research in the Schools, 13*(1), 29-40.

With regard to author submissions, over the 4-year span of 2005 through 2008, the author manuscript log included a total of 110 manuscripts submitted by authors affiliated with a university in the US. Other submitted manuscripts originated from authors of various school districts and the private sector. Primary authors affiliated with universities resided in 28 various U.S. states. As illustrated in Figure 2 (National Weather Service, 1999), authors affiliated with universities in Alabama submitted the majority of manuscripts (14%), followed by Texas (12%), Arkansas (9%), and Florida (8%). Interestingly, two of the three states with the largest proportion of authors are not affiliated with MSERA. Thus, this representation provides further evidence of the national status of *RITS*.

Currently in its 15th year, *RITS* continues to uphold the founding vision of MSERA through the efforts of co-editors Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie and John R. Slate, editorial assistant Rebecca K. Frels, the editorial board, and contributing authors from a widespread demography nationwide and beyond. The journey of manuscripts from author conception to journal production should be encouraging for future researchers, authors, and the MSERA community. Compelling feature editorials, special issues, scholarly research, innovation, ingenuity, and cutting-edge methodological articles continue to be the crux of *RITS* publications for promoting quality research in the schools.

Figure 1. States of residence of *Research in the Schools* editorial board members and graduate student board members. Numbers per state depict a ratio of editorial board members to graduate student board members; states with single digits represent editorial board members only.

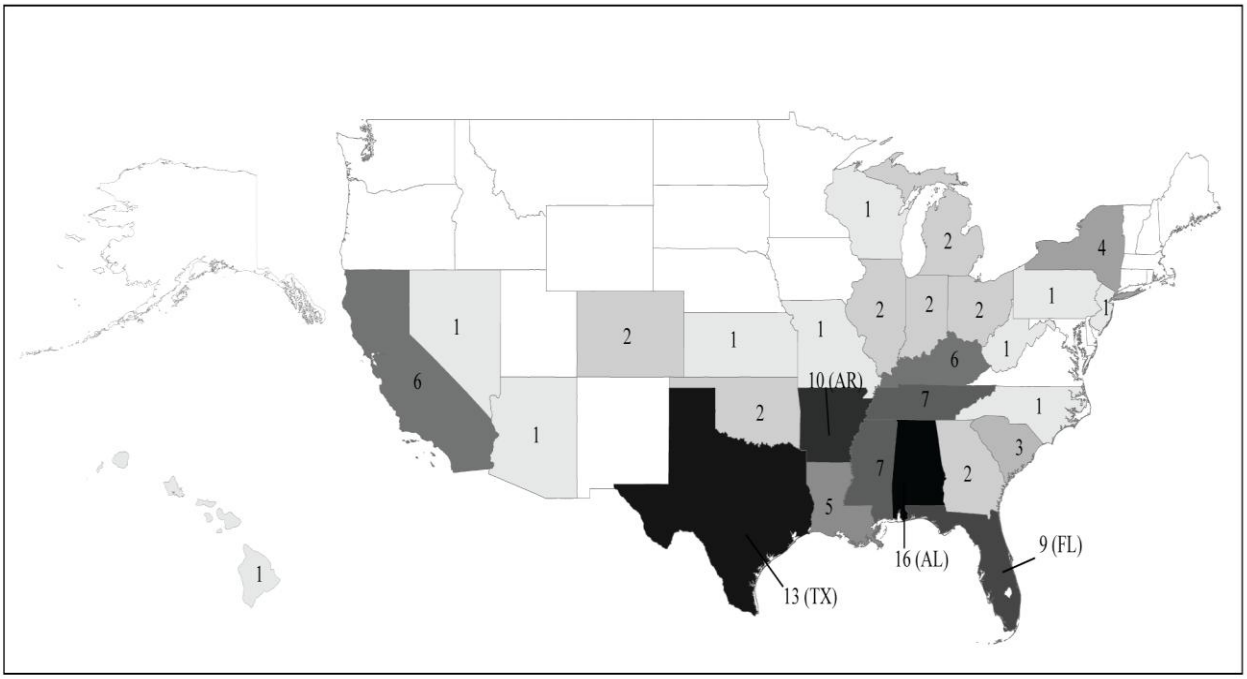

Figure 2. States of residence of authors submitting manuscripts to *RITS*.

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