

*RESPONDING TO REQUESTS FOR REPRINTS:  
HOW DO JABA AUTHORS MEASURE UP?*

RAYMOND J. WALLER

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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The dissemination of knowledge to other scientists and practitioners in one's field of interest is of critical importance, and the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* has been in the forefront of the dissemination of knowledge for behavior analysts for more than a quarter of a century. Unfortunately, physical access to *JABA* and other professional journals is difficult for some practitioners and members of the academic community, particularly international professionals (Gnepp, 1981). *JABA* subscribers span 54 countries other than the United States, and for these subscribers, as well as others who have restricted access to the relevant literature, the responding to requests for reprints continues to be an important avenue for dissemination. In fact, dissemination should be considered "an ongoing obligation of the authors of scholarly works, part and parcel of the process of disseminating knowledge" (Thyer, 1994, p. 83).

To assess *JABA* authors' response rate for requests for reprints, 225 articles printed in *JABA* were selected from Volume 25 (1992), Volume 26 (1993), and Volume 27 (1994), and the corresponding authors of these articles were sent letters requesting reprints of their work. If more than one corresponding author was listed, a letter was sent to the first author. For each article, an individual request was sent that specified the volume and issue in which the article appeared and the title of the article. Articles received within 8 weeks from the initial mailing date were

considered to be a response to the request, and articles that were not received or were received after 8 weeks were counted as a failure to respond to the request. Eight weeks was hypothesized to be ample time to accommodate individual schedules and postal service time.

Of the 225 requests that were mailed, 140 were returned during the 8-week period of observation, giving an overall return rate of 62%. Three additional requests were returned as undeliverable, and one letter was sent by an author who could not send a reprint due to his philosophical objection to *JABA's* policy of charging a fee for reprints. This author sent the advice that the investigator might obtain a reprint through interlibrary exchange.

The interpretation of the rate of return for reprint requests will depend on the reader's perspective. There were, undoubtedly, additional requests that were undeliverable due to vocational relocation and subsequent expiration of forwarding services. A portion of the requests, although the exact portion is unknown, possibly fell victim to postal error. Outliers also affected the outcome. For example, one productive scholar who was sent 19 requests for reprints of his work did not respond. Had these requests been received, the overall rate of return would have risen to 70%—a significant increase.

Most of the responding authors showed interest in their work and in the dissemination of their scholarship. The American Psychological Association's guide to scholarly publishing indicates that additional information about published works should be available to readers from the authors of such

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Address correspondence to Raymond J. Waller, School of Social Work, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602-7016.

articles (American Psychological Association, 1994), and most responding authors sent notes, memos, or references to related material. In addition, 50 related articles and reference lists were included, often with invitations to contact the author with questions or for further assistance.

An author to whom requests for reprints can be sent is still included on published articles in most scholarly journals. Requests for reprints continue to be made with appreciable regularity, and they remain one of the primary means by which some scholars and practitioners can obtain the work of publishing researchers. For this reason, it is not unrealistic to desire a return from every

request for reprints that is received. A return of 62% from articles that have been published as long ago as 4 years previously indicates scholarly accountability, although it would not be unreasonable to strive for a higher rate of return.

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