

A&A Publishing Policies

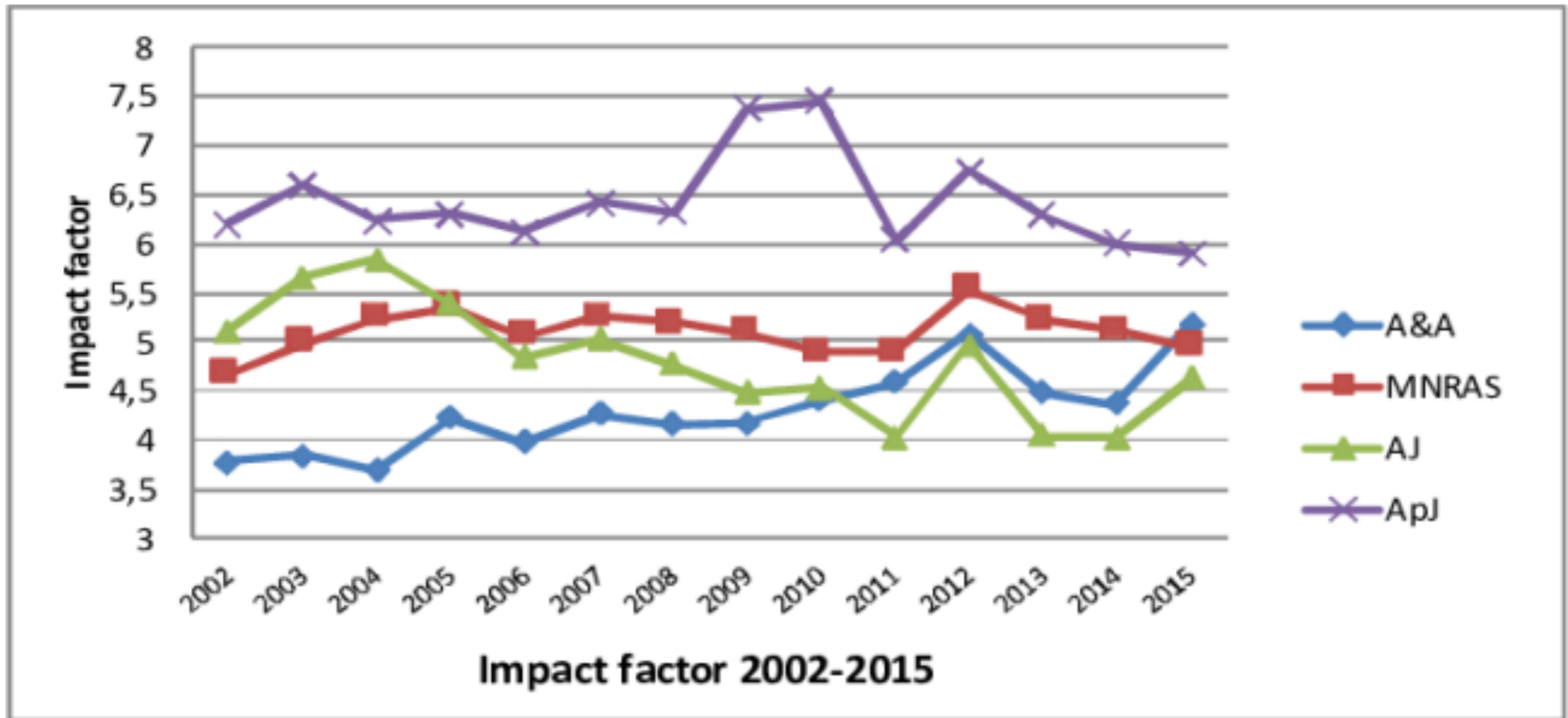
André Moitinho
Chairperson, A&A Board

Special thanks: T. Forveille, B. Nordström

PREAMBLE

- **April 6, 1968**, astronomers from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands met with a **goal**: to create a European Journal substituting the many national and local astronomical journals and bulletins (a response to ApJ/AJ).
- **First issue** of A&A: **Jan 1969**.
- Today it is a consortium of **sponsoring organisations** from **25* countries** in Europe and beyond. (www.aanda.org/board-of-directors)
- 2016 Impact Factor: **5.016**: 2nd of the "big 4"

Brief history



- **Board of Directors:** one member from each sponsoring organisation.
It is the governing body, owns the journal.
 - **Long-term (scientific) policies of the journal**
 - Appoints the Scientific Editors
 - Negotiates contract with the Publisher
- **Scientific Editors:** responsible for the **contents of the journal**; manage the **refereeing process**; Editorial Office day-to-day interface with Publisher
- **Publisher:** production, sales, distribution, promotion (SWYA)*
- **Agreement with ESO**
- **Collaboration with CDS**

- **Board of Directors**
- **Scientific Editors**
- **Publisher**
- **Agreement with ESO:** acts on behalf of the Board for contractual, legal matters and financial administration. Receives a payment, one representative in the Board and is the depositary of copyright.
- **Collaboration with CDS:** Paid on-line publication* of article data

- The **Sponsoring Bodies** share the **operation cost** of the Journal (Editorial Offices, Board, etc) which is mainly set by **annual contributions**. Extra: page charges, OA
- Publishing is done by an external contractor the Publisher.
 - **A&A does not pay** the Publisher's services.
 - The **Publisher** makes a **profit by selling subscriptions**.
 - The Publisher hands to A&A a revenue fixed by the Board.
- Authors from **sponsoring countries do not pay page charges**.
- The Journal cannot accumulate reserves.*

“Publicly funded research should be available to public”.
Yes, but costs money and someone has to pay it

Green Open Access (e.g. ArXiv)

Gold OA (free access) **after one year**

Immediate Gold OA:

- **Letters**
- **[Sec 12]** Atomic, molecular, and nuclear data
- **[Sec 13]** Astronomical instrumentation
- **[Sec 14]** Catalogs and data
- **[Sec 15]** Numerical methods and codes

Latest issue is **freely** accessible

Hybrid GOA: Immediate - authors pay fee

A&A is thus very OA! Future will depend on policy makers

Full Gold OA → significantly higher page charges/contributions

PUBLISHING POLICIES

A&A has the motto "a Journal run by astronomers for astronomers"

~~Who can publish~~

What can be published:

- "Papers should present new astronomical results or ideas of sufficient interest to the community" (regular and letters)
- Must follow a code of ethical conduct: plagiarism, self plagiarism, improper attribution, multiple journals

Assessed by the **editors** with the invaluable help of the **referees**

- **Scientific Editors (11)**: responsible for the **contents of the journal**; manage the **refereeing process**; take the **decision of publishing** a paper or not
- **Editorial Office** day-to-day interface with Publisher

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: T. Forveille

1969 → 1471 pages (3 volumes)

LETTERS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: J. Alves

2005 → 19220 pages (16 volumes)

MANAGING EDITOR: N. Aghanim

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

C. Bertout A. Ferrara H. Peter

S. Campana T. Guillot S.N. Shore

F. Combes R. Kotak

Scientific Editors **are not** a PBX limited to sending papers to referees.

Not for A&A (~5% - decision by 2 editors):

- Crackpots (filtered by Editor in Chief)
- Evidently flawed
- Not enough material (changes with time)
- Too specialised (subcomponent of an instrument, calibration reports, etc...)
- Outside astronomy (image processing, etc...)

Written/structured well enough? English good enough? (don't waste referee's time)

Manuscripts should be submitted to appropriate section (and written with that in mind). Specially if they might be perceived as not having enough astronomical results.

Can affect specially:

- Instruments and observational techniques
- Catalogs and data papers
- Papers on special subjects

Detailed in the instruction to authors

https://www.aanda.org/doc_journal/instructions/aadoc.pdf

Most difficult part of the job: Finding good referees

This is a presentation subject on its own right

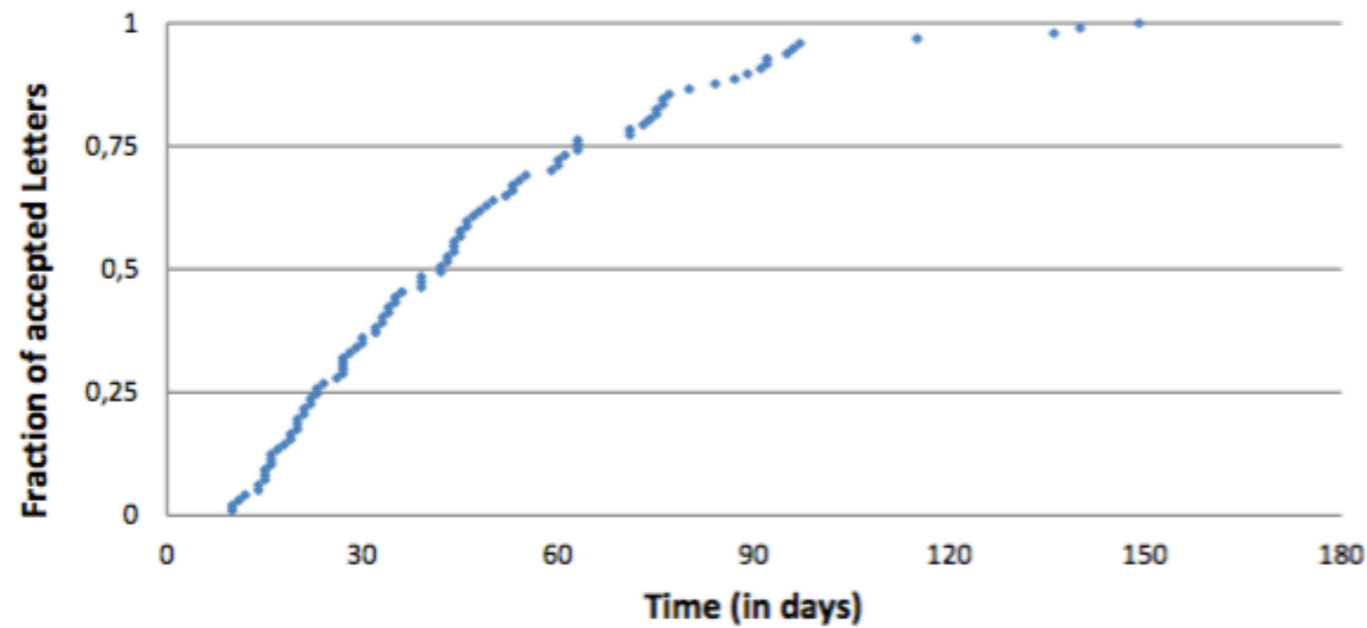
Referees work for free (or for an A&A calendar!)

Potential referees judge papers from abstract (a reason for a very good abstract); reputation of the authors

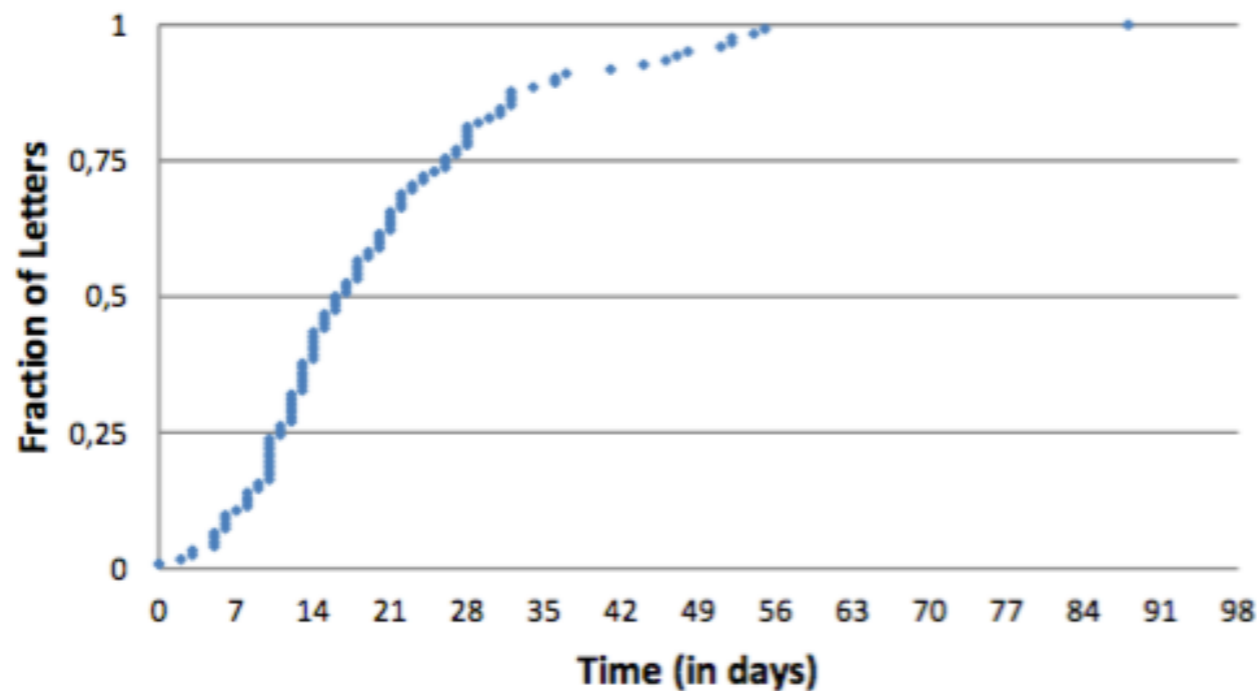
A lot harder to find a referee for a poor paper:
much more work; easiest report is “publish as is”; hardest is rejection and much less fun

Add referee quality-control (blacklist, conflict, too slow..)

Editing - peer review II



Cumulative distribution of acceptance times for Letters in 2016



Cumulative distribution of refereeing times for A&A Letters in 2016

How are the whole process and the policies perceived?

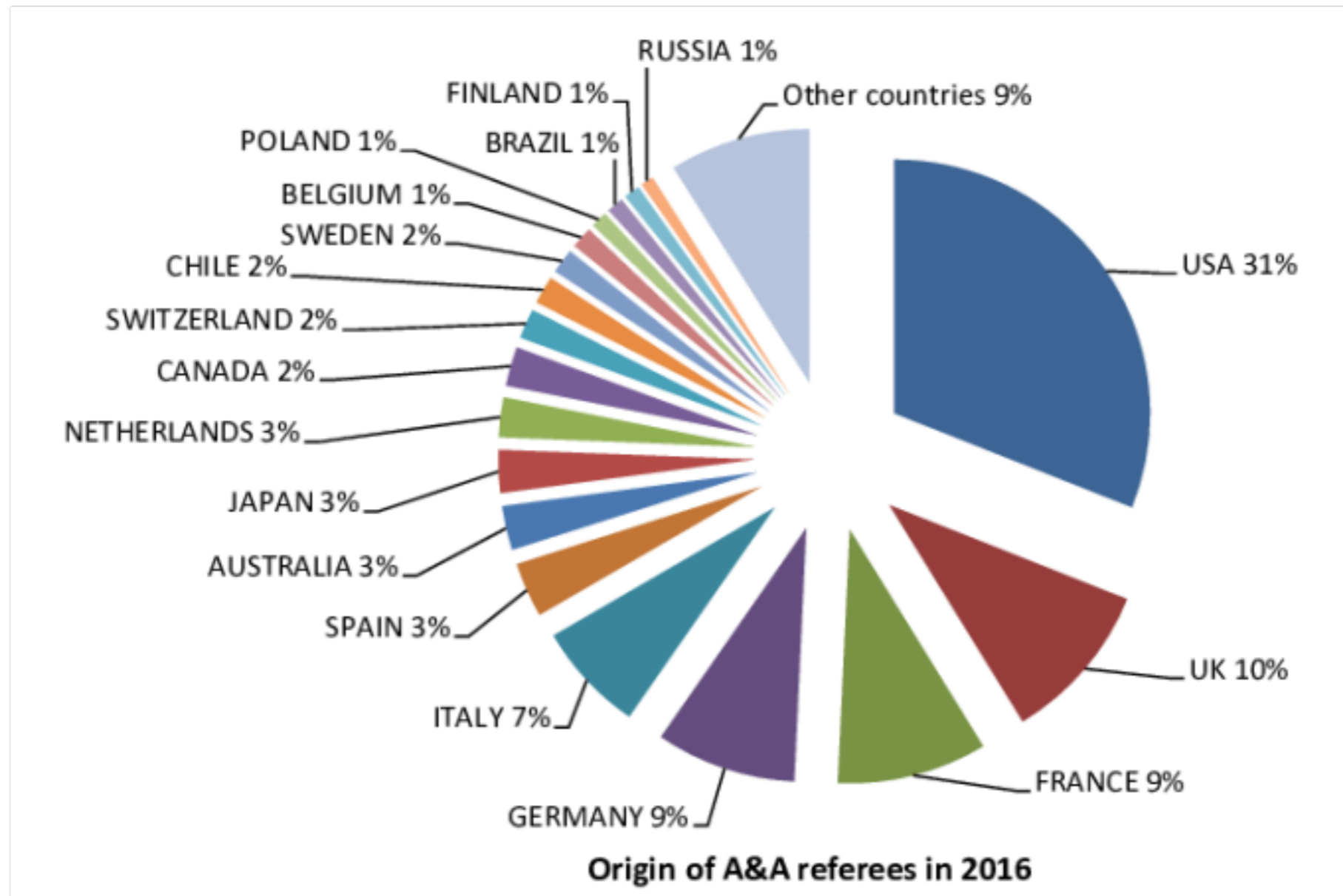
Also a presentation subject on its own right

Study in Bertout & Walmsley 2008, A&A, 480, E3–E16
"The 2007 A&A author survey: answers and follow-up": led to adoption of new practices and organisation

Time for a new consultation! Will start soon.

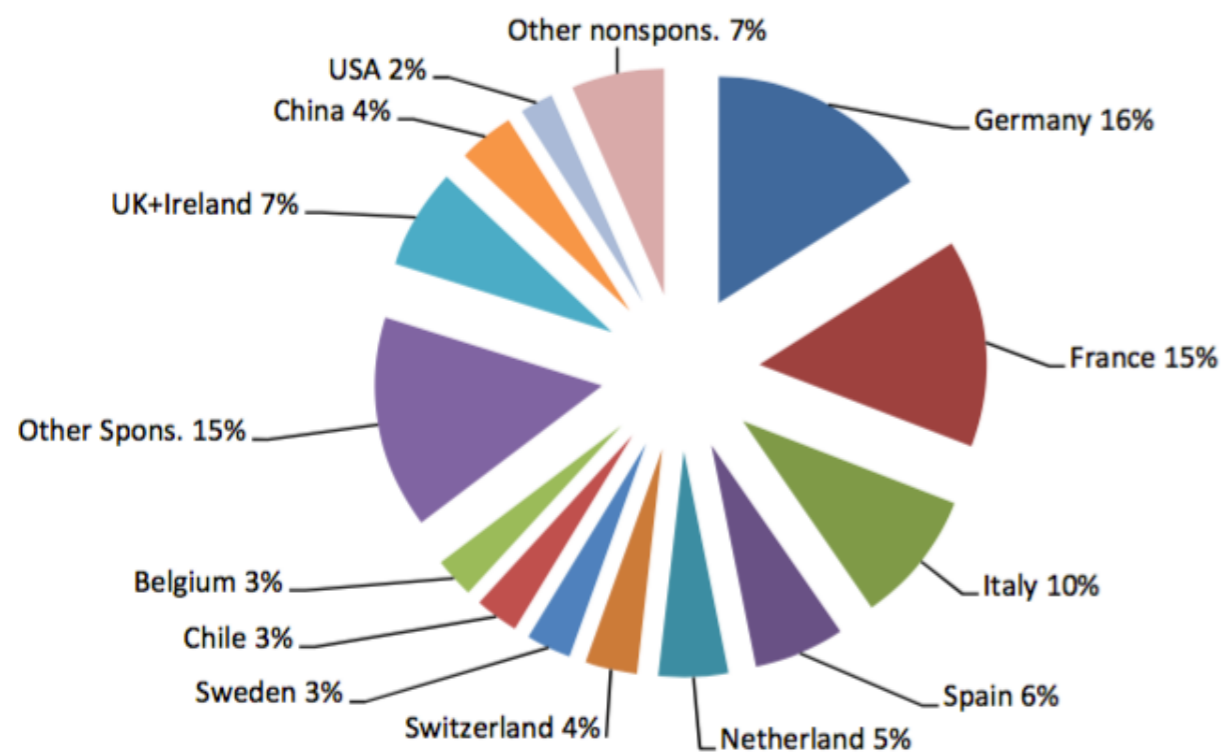
Some feedback I

Misconception: Referees are from sponsoring countries

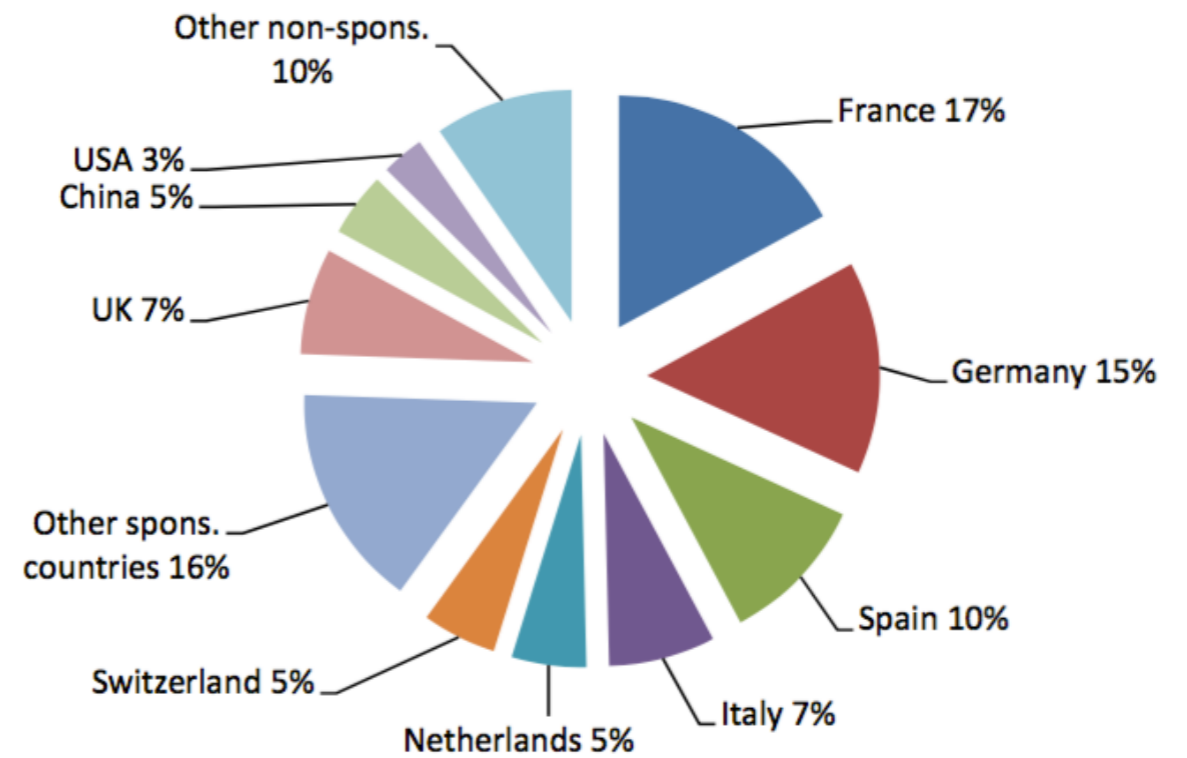


Some feedback II

Misconception: Authors are from sponsoring countries



Origin of A&A Main Journal submissions in 2016



Origin of A&A Letters in 2016

Other misconceptions

- Authors from non sponsoring countries are not treated like those from sponsoring countries
- Subject X is discriminated against subject Y

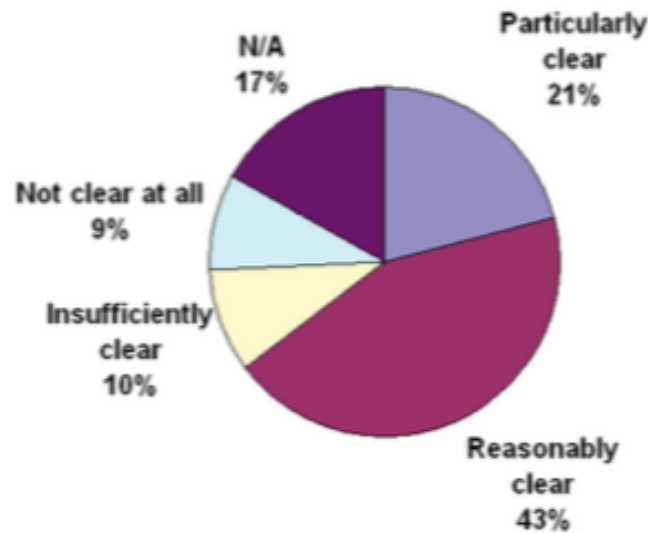
Other comments

- Too many average papers are published
- Speed of peer-reviewing process

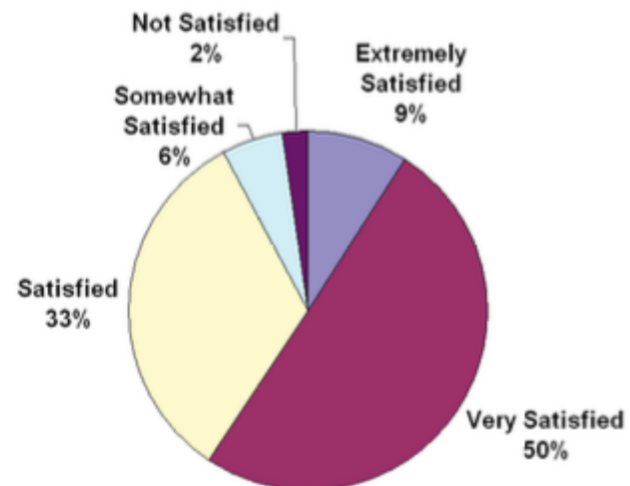
Some feedback III

4.1.4. Decisions made by the Editor in Chief/Letters Editor in Chief in case of conflict are taken in the journal's best interests and do not necessarily please the plaintiffs. With this in mind, how would you describe the reasoning given by the Editor in Chief/Letters Editor in Chief in support of their decision(s) (even if you did not agree with the outcome of your appeal)?

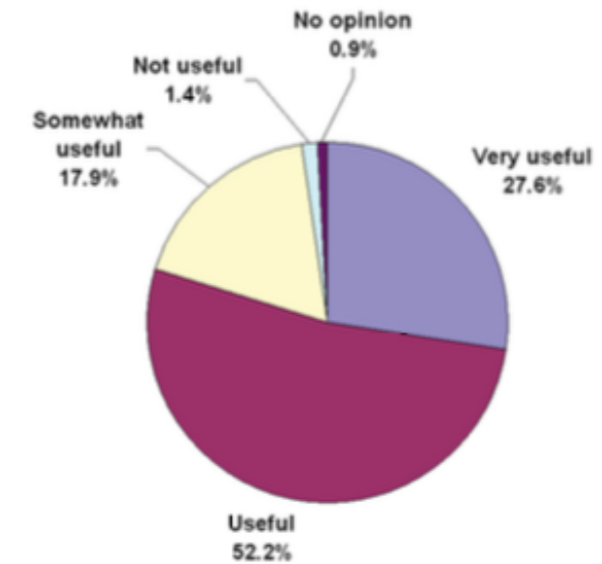
The following percentages are based on the 189 positive replies to Question 4.1.1.



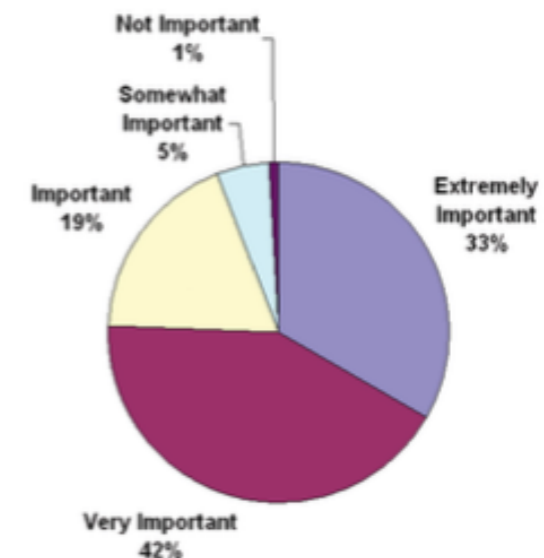
3.1.6. In general, how satisfied are you with the performance of A&A Editors?



3.1.5. Please rate the general usefulness of the peer-review process in improving the articles that you submitted to A&A



5.1.1. How would you qualify the importance of English-language editing for the overall perceived quality of A&A articles?



Recommended reading

- C. Bertout & P. Schneider** 2004, A&A 420, E1–E14 "**Editorship and peer-review at A&A**"
- C. Bertout & M. Walmsley** 2008, A&A, 480, E3–E16 "**The 2007 A&A author survey: answers and follow-up**"
- C. Bertout 2013**, "**The Astronomy & Astrophysics Journal: Origin, Purview, and Ethical Requirements**" in Organizations, People and Strategies in Astronomy Vol. 2, Edited by Andre Heck, Vennggeist, Duttlenheim (2013) pp. 347-35
- A. Blaauw** 1975 Europhysics News, 6, 3 "**Astronomy and Astrophysics: A European Journal its History and Present Status**"
- S.R. Pottasch** 2011, EAS Pub Series, Volume 49, pp.23-31 "**The history of the creation of Astronomy & Astrophysics**"
[free on A&A web]

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C. Bertout & P. Schneider 2004, A&A 420, E1–E14 "Editorship and peer-review at A&A"

Levy 2008, A&A, 480, E3–E16 "The 2007 A&A follow-up"

C. Bertout 2013, "The Journal: Origin, Purview, and Ethical Requirements" in *Strategies in Astronomy Vol. 2*, Edited by **Duttlenheim** (2013) pp. 347-35

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Instruction to authors

<https://www.aanda.org/doc/journal/instructions/aadoc.pdf>