



Editor's Desk

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The Journal of Indian Institute of Science has a different interdisciplinary theme for each of its issues since 2007. As each issue contains review articles, it becomes a collector's item or a principal reference for those working on that particular topic. Since each issue caters to a specific niche area of research, it is presumably not read regularly by many. If there are regular readers of this journal, they may simply scan to see if anything outside their fields of expertise interests them. I doubt if there are indeed any regular readers of this journal. If there are, we, in the Editorial Board, would like to hear from them.

I wonder if journals that have specific focus have regular readers now. The way researchers follow the literature seems to have changed considerably in recent years. Old-fashioned researchers pick up a paper copy of a journal and browse through it to get a view of the state of the art. This is a rare species already. Those who are transitioning from paper copies to soft copies or online alerts browse the table of contents of their favorite journals and click on one or two articles that pique their curiosity. This phenotype is also diminishing, it appears. These days most researchers turn to Google Scholar and other search engines for doing literature search. As a result, they see only what they want to see. In any one issue of the journal, most might look at only one article. They might not be curious to see what else might be there in that issue. To make matters worse (or better, it is hard to say), the online portals of some journals show related papers to the one being looked at, not unlike Amazon or Flipkart that show us "who bought this item bought also these other items". Targeted and guided searches such as these are good for instant gratification since we get what we want at that moment. But then, if we do that, are we not missing precious information that might be hidden in that same issue of the journal?

Targeted online search for papers offers a benefit that paper copies of journals cannot. In the old era of only paper copies, we could only go into the past of a paper by looking at the cited references. Today, we get to see the future by clicking on the papers that cited that paper. If one does it diligently, it is possible to construct the entire flow of a topic from its inception to the state of the art by spending a few hours or days on Google Scholar. Perhaps, such compiled lists of articles on each topic might exist somewhere for some topics already. We never know what is in the vast Internet. It is too crowded for us to efficiently navigate like the roads in urban areas.

Incidentally, the theme of the current issue, ably guest-edited by Prof. Abdul Rawoof Pinjari, is transportation science, the field of research that aims to solve our ubiquitous traffic problems. Prof. Pinjari has put together papers that give us a bird's-eye view of urban transportation research. The cited references (and those that cited them!) help us dive deeper into those topics. We are grateful to him, the authors, and the reviewers for their time and effort.

The great ideas reviewed in this issue, we hope, will take us to the day when people cannot use the excuse of traffic delays for being late.

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