

## SCG commentary: analysis of submission data, 1999–2004

Rob Kitchin

NIRSA and Department of Geography, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Co, Kildare,  
Ireland, rob.kitchin@nuim.ie

### Introduction

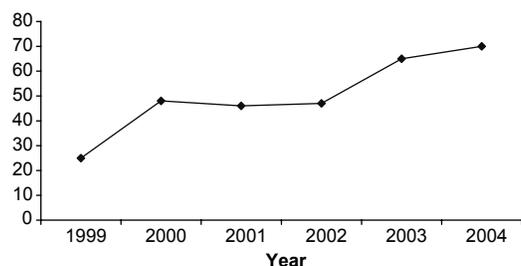
This short report presents an analysis of submissions to *Social & Cultural Geography* (SCG) during the journal's first few years, 1999–2004. In this time, SCG has made steady progress in attracting good-quality manuscripts, undertaken some novel initiatives, and been accepted into the ISI citation index. The editors have also worked hard to try to create an international journal, with as reported below, mixed outcomes. As a result of rising submission rates and high-quality manuscripts, the journal increased to six issues per year in 2005.

### Submission rates

From 1999 to 2004, 301 papers were submitted to the journal. After an initial steady start, just under fifty papers per year between 2000 and 2002, submissions grew in 2003 and 2004 to reach seventy per year (not including commentaries and country reports; see Figure 1).

Table 1 details the location origin of these submissions, displayed using the percentage of submissions for each year in Figure 2. UK and US submissions predominate, constituting between 50 and 75 per cent of submitted papers in any one year (averaging just under 60 per cent of submissions between 2001 and 2004). The other 40 per cent of submissions are made up of approximately 25 per cent from other aligned Anglo-American locations (Australia, Canada, New Zealand) and 15 per cent from European and other countries around the world. Encouragingly, 25 per cent of submissions in 2004 were from European and rest of the world sources, and we are working to try to increase that percentage in coming years.

In addition, between 2003 and 2004 nine country reports were published (from Denmark, France, Spain, Netherlands, Mexico, South Africa, UK, Israel and Brazil) and fifteen have been published in 2005 or are forthcoming or commissioned (from South-East Asia, Canada, Greece, Finland, Australia, Italy, India, Ireland, Slovakia, Estonia, Germany, New Zealand, Hungary, Sweden and Norway). Country reports are published



**Figure 1** Submissions to SCG, 1999–2004.

in English and the country's official national language (see Kitchin 2003, 2005 for introduction). In addition, SCG has always published abstracts in French and Spanish for every paper. These reports will hopefully help to encourage more international submissions.

Table 2 details the number of submissions to SCG by female authors. Given the balance of women to men in the discipline, we believe it a healthy sign that so many see SCG as a welcoming space in which to seek publication.

### Success rates

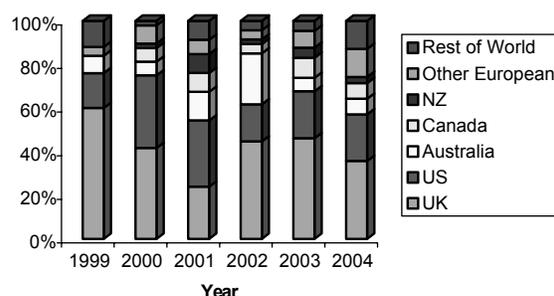
In terms of calculating success rates it is necessary to calculate the figures from 1999–2003 data. This is because most papers submitted in this period have received a final decision with regards publication, having

completed revisions. Of the 231 papers submitted (1999–2003), 137 papers have been published or are to be published in forthcoming issues. That constitutes a 59 per cent success rate.

We are aware that this figure is relatively high compared to other journals and there is a good reason for this. The editors of SCG made a commitment when starting the journal to help postgraduate students and authors for whom English is not their first language to get their papers published. The number of papers accepted with minor or major revisions after initial submission is substantially lower than 59 per cent. While a number of papers are flat-out rejected, a large percentage are classified as revise and resubmit. As editors we spend a lot of time, often editing multiple drafts, to convert revise and resubmit papers into acceptable papers. Our broader editorial experience suggests that many of these papers would not end up being published in other journals, simply because it is enormously time-consuming for editors to perform this kind of development editorial work. To put it another way, there is some very good work being conducted that is often poorly expressed and written. Much of it never gets to be published in international journals because it is written by authors lacking writing skills and experience, or are trying to write in a second language.

**Table 1** Locational origin of submissions to SCG, 1999–2004

| Location       | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | Total |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| UK             | 15   | 20   | 11   | 21   | 30   | 25   | 122   |
| USA            | 4    | 16   | 14   | 8    | 14   | 15   | 71    |
| Australia      | 2    | 3    | 6    | 11   | 4    | 5    | 31    |
| Canada         | 0    | 3    | 4    | 2    | 6    | 5    | 20    |
| New Zealand    | 0    | 1    | 4    | 1    | 3    | 2    | 11    |
| Other European | 1    | 4    | 3    | 2    | 5    | 9    | 24    |
| Rest of world  | 3    | 1    | 4    | 2    | 3    | 9    | 22    |
| Total          | 25   | 48   | 46   | 47   | 65   | 70   | 301   |



**Figure 2** Percentage of submissions from locational origins to SCG for each individual year, 1999–2004.

We therefore see the high acceptance rate as a success and it does not represent the publication of poor material, rather the opposite. It means we are publishing a lot more quality material than other journals who are often rejecting very good work simply because it requires development editing and they have limited space and time which limits them to accepting material that is well written and expressed in the initial submission. We have sympathy with this position given the demands of editing a journal, but we feel our strategy is paying dividends beyond producing a high-quality journal.

If we analyse the success rate of papers by location of contributing authors, we do see a slightly worrying trend, however (see Table 3). European and rest of the world contributors are experiencing higher rates of rejection than

Anglo-American submissions even given the sympathetic stance of the editors and their developmental editing. This is most often because the developmental work needed to get these papers to a publishable form is excessive, to the extent that papers require full re-drafts. This is often stemming from the fact the papers are written in the author's second language. In addition, the papers often fail to engage with wider debates or literatures, with some being highly empiricist when SCG seeks to publish theoretically informed, empirical research. We are still working on how to redress this issue given papers will be published in English and need to be theoretically grounded and placed in the context of present debates. The low rate for New Zealand is simply a function of a low number of submissions. If five papers had been accepted instead of four then the percentage success would increase to 55.5, in line with the USA and Australia.

With respect to success rates by gender, Table 4 reveals an encouraging pattern. Over the five reported years the number of accepted papers written by women has been above 50 per cent. While the 2003 rate matches approximately the overall success rate, for three years that rate has been exceeded. In other words, there is no evidence of gender

**Table 2** Gender of contributing author

| Year  | Female author | Total | Total percentage |
|-------|---------------|-------|------------------|
| 1999  | 9             | 25    | 36.00            |
| 2000  | 24            | 48    | 50.00            |
| 2001  | 26            | 46    | 56.52            |
| 2002  | 18            | 47    | 38.30            |
| 2003  | 26            | 65    | 40.00            |
| 2004  | 33            | 70    | 47.14            |
| Total | 136           | 301   | 45.18            |

**Table 3** Success rate of location of contributing author

| Location       | Successful | Total submitted | Percentage successful |
|----------------|------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| UK             | 64         | 97              | 65.98                 |
| USA            | 32         | 56              | 57.14                 |
| Australia      | 15         | 26              | 57.69                 |
| Canada         | 10         | 15              | 66.67                 |
| New Zealand    | 4          | 9               | 44.44                 |
| Other European | 6          | 15              | 40.00                 |
| Rest of world  | 6          | 13              | 46.15                 |
| Total          | 137        | 231             | 59.31                 |

**Table 4** Success rate by gender (papers by female author)

| Year  | No. of papers | Number accepted | Percentage |
|-------|---------------|-----------------|------------|
| 1999  | 9             | 6               | 66.67      |
| 2000  | 24            | 12              | 50.00      |
| 2001  | 26            | 18              | 69.23      |
| 2002  | 18            | 12              | 66.67      |
| 2003  | 26            | 15              | 57.69      |
| Total | 103           | 63              | 61.17      |

discrimination with regards to submissions by women and there is a clear appreciation of feminist research more broadly.

## Conclusion

The figures presented in this short commentary, along with the move to six issues per year and inclusion in the ISI citation index, demonstrate the initial success of *Social & Cultural Geography*. While there are some concerns with regards the submission and

success rates of papers from outside of Anglo-American geography, there are signs that our efforts to address these concerns are paying some dividends. There is clearly more work to do in this regard, however. Particularly pleasing, we feel, is the success in turning papers classed as revise and resubmit into quality publications. Our aim in this regards is to continue to work with authors to produce interesting and significant papers. Overall, we believe that *Social & Cultural Geography* is heading in the right direction and we welcome feedback on our progress.

## References

- Kitchin, R. (2003) Editorial: Country reports, *Social & Cultural Geography* 4(2): 253–254.  
 Kitchin, R. (2005) Disrupting and destabilising Anglo-American and English-language hegemony in Geography, *Social & Cultural Geography* 6(1): 1–16.