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Women and Birth: a prestigious international journal (editorial)

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Editorial

Women and Birth: A Prestigious International Journal

In this editorial I will advise you of the continuing advances in *Women and Birth.* Since I became editor and Elsevier became the publisher; our journal has moved from strength to strength. There have been dramatic increases in the numbers of readers, the internationalization of our readerships and in measures of scientific prestige.

Our renewed and internationally expanded Editorial Board adds strength and scientific credibility to *Women and Birth*. I particularly offer a warm welcome to your new deputy editor: Professor Lesley Page. Lesley lives in the UK but has practised also in Canada. She has a high international profile as an academic, practitioner and leader of midwifery. Lesley's research career has focused on the organisation of maternity care including continuity of care and effects of place of birth. Her interest is in providing individually sensitive care based on good evidence. I also warmly welcome the new Associate-Editors in their roles. These are prestigious appointments based on expressions of interest received and then selected for the most appropriate midwifery researchers for the journal.

Turning to the topic of journal quality and journal ranking: in March 2011, I prepared a report on the quality of *Women and Birth* for the Australian Research Councils' (ARC) Excellence in Research for Australia's (ERA) review. I did this with some trepidation as *Women and Birth* had not been fairly ranked (in my opinion) in the previous, and controversial, system of ranking journals as A*, A, B and C. However, I was not alone with my concern.

The Australian Academy of Science opposed the journal ranking process. In their submission to the ARC they argued that the ABC rankings of journals should be abandoned because:

> "key areas such as interdisciplinary research and new research were seriously disadvantaged by journal ranking. This affected not only areas of science and technology, but also interactions between the sciences and the humanities. It has been very distressing to see some universities using publications in highly ranked journals as the basis for funding, promotions, and even staff appointments. "The ranking of a journal as A* does not mean every paper in it is first rate, and some very good papers may appear in smaller journals. People whose work is very relevant to Australian issues rather than internationally, and those in new fields or collaborating between several universities, have been particularly disadvantaged." [1]

On May 30th 2011 Senator Kim Carr, the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research announced that he had asked the ARC to abandon the journal ranking process and request a journal quality profile be put in place. Senator Carr said:

> There is clear and consistent evidence that the rankings were being deployed inappropriately within some quarters of the sector, in ways that could produce harmful outcomes, and based on a poor understanding of the

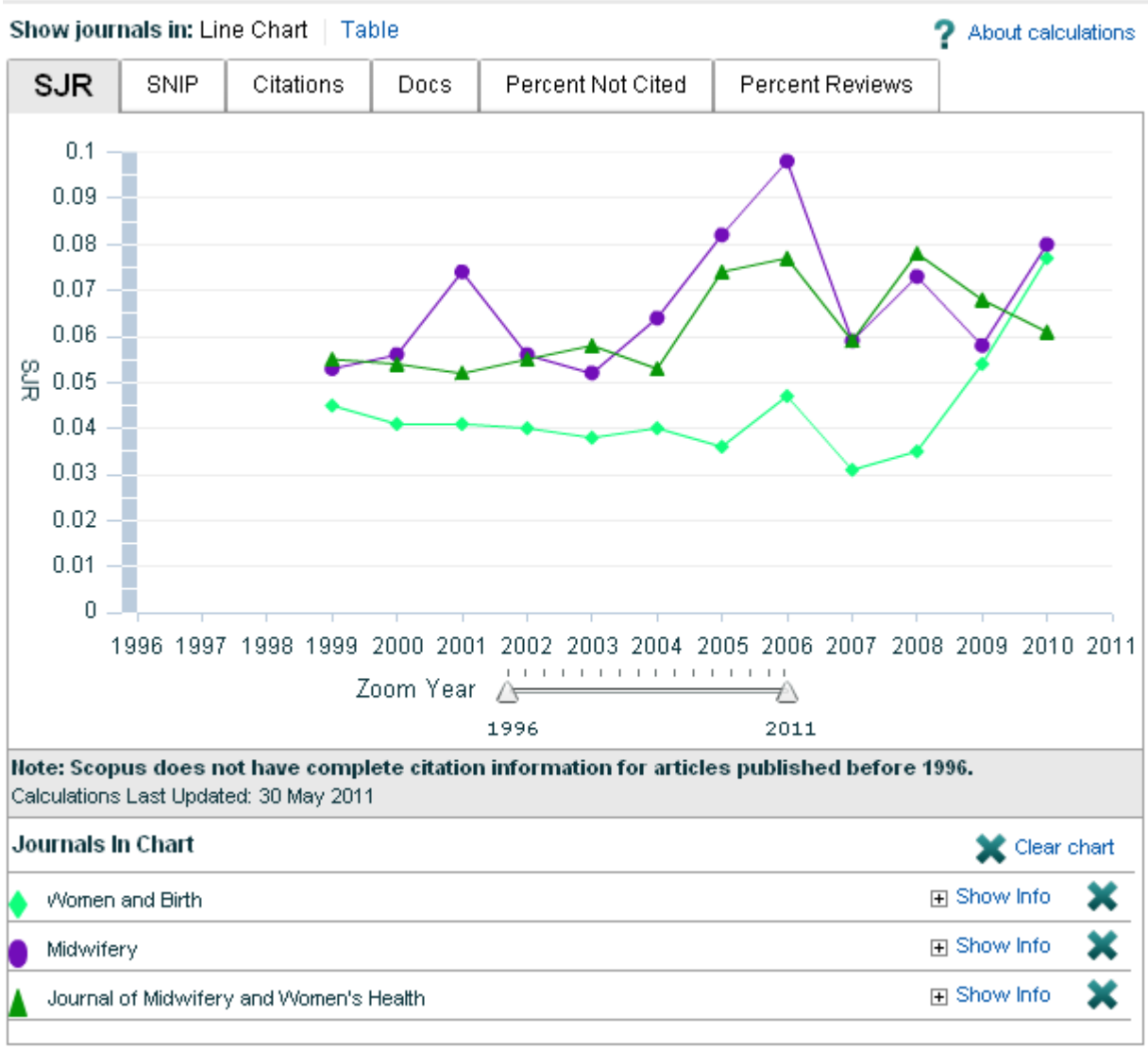
actual role of the rankings. One common example was the setting of targets for publication in A and A* journals by institutional research managers.[2]

What does the journal profile of *Women and Birth* look like?

Women and Birth continues to expand its readership and international reach. Since beginning of publishing with Elsevier in 2006 and under my editorship the improvements have been dramatic. In 2006 we had 1400 downloads of full text articles from our journal. Last year, by comparison, we had 54,342 downloads. We are on track to reach over 75,000 full text downloads by the end of this year. Whereas once our readership was virtually 100% Australian, now Australians make up only 42% of all readers; the rest are international: 18.9% from the UK and 8.9% from the USA.

The scientific prestige of *Women and Birth* has risen remarkably over the past 5 years; the last 2 years in particular. The prestige of our journal now matches or exceeds journals that may have been subjectively perceived as having a higher scientific status. The graph below was extracted from the Journal Analyser at Scopus. This graph uses the Scimago Journal rank (SJR) which "is a measure of the scientific prestige of scholarly sources: value of weighted citations per document. A source transfers its own 'prestige', or status, to another source through the act of citing it. A citation from a source with a relatively high SJR is worth more than a citation from a source with a lower SJR"[3] Note that *Women and Birth* and *Midwifery* have essentially the same scientific prestige according to the SJR rank and that

both journals out-rank the *Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health*.



This graph demonstrates that since 2009 *Women and Birth* is rated more highly that the *Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health* and equally with the UK journal, *Midwifery*. The members of the peer review panel and the previous sub-editors deserve much of the credit; they have carefully and collaboratively raised the standards for papers that are accepted: this is reflected in our decreased acceptance rate which for this year is 50% (last year was 65%) I am grateful to Adrianne Chai, Paula Flynn and Fiona Barron of Elsevier, for their dedication to assisting the editorial board and I to raise the standard of Women and Birth.

In summary, our journal has made substantial gains in readership strength, international reach, and scientific prestige. With the newly invigorated and internationalised editorial board we can expect to build upon these gains. All members of the Australian College of Midwives can take pride in the achievements of their journal and can publish with us with pride.

References

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2. The Australian Academy of Science (2011). Press Release 30th May. http://www.science.org.au/news/media/30may11.html. Accessed 10th July, 2011

3. Scopus Journal Analyser. http://www.info.sciverse.com.ezproxy.scu.edu.au/scopus/scopus-in-detail/tools/journalanalyzer/. Accessed 10th July 2011
4.