

Meet Fred Mannering, Editor-in-Chief of Transportation Research Part B: Methodological

This editor profile is the twenty-third in a series which will introduce you to a selection of our editors. This week we have an interview with Fred Mannering, Editor-in-Chief of [Transportation Research Part B: Methodological](#).

What aspect of being an editor do you find most rewarding?

It is always an honor to be given the opportunity to read and assess authors' work. And, it is most rewarding when we, as a journal, are able to improve the work further through the review process. As a journal, it is our goal to make sure the highest quality papers become the best they can be so that they can effectively reach their target audience and have a lasting impact on the transportation field.

What advice would you give to an author submitting a paper to Transportation Research Part B?

Because Transportation Research Part B has a strong methodological focus, it is important that the authors clearly articulate the methodological contribution of their work. We also look for quality writing (this can never be overstated), a logical progression of thought (in terms of motivation to analysis) and a careful attention to detail throughout (proper referencing of past work etc. is a hallmark of the best papers). Following up on the "referencing" theme, I would advise authors to carefully tie their research to the existing literature so that reviewers and eventually readers of the paper can put the authors' work in proper perspective and be able to chart the evolution of thought in this field. This, in turn, can point the way for future developments that readers may eventually pursue.

What advice would you give to a fellow researcher? How do you stay on top of new developments in your field?

The best advice I could give a fellow researcher is to think carefully about the impact that their work will have. In today's academic environment, there is great pressure placed on researchers to increase the number of publications. This, I believe, has forced many researchers to split their ideas into multiple papers instead of putting their ideas into a single influential paper. However, in the long run, the single influential paper is likely to have more of an impact and be more highly cited than the sum of the "split" papers. So, in many respects, there is a false economy associated with splitting ideas among several papers. At Part B we encourage the single influential paper and, although we seek to have papers that are efficient and to the point, we do not place restrictions on the length of papers so if the single influential paper requires more journal space that is not a problem.



I find that serving as editor of Part B is one great way of staying on top of new developments in the field since, with its long standing high citation-impact factor, Part B manuscript submissions generally attract papers at the cutting edge of developments in the field. I also keep track of developments in the field by following other transportation journals and tracking the citation databases (Thomson Reuters ISI web of knowledge and Scopus) which provide additional information on emerging developments. I also keep my own research program active, which helps to keep me current on at least one portion of the very broad transportation field.

Why did you choose Transportation Research as your field of study?

Actually, although I always had a passion for cars, I did not develop a serious interest in transportation until I started graduate school. As an undergraduate my focus was on the analysis of structures. However, my interest grew quickly as I became fascinated by the breadth of the transportation field and the complexity of the issues involved. In particular, since the performance of transportation systems often relies heavily on individual user decisions, studying elements of the user decision-making process has been both interesting and challenging, and is probably the single most important reason why I chose the transportation field.

What's new in the field of Transportation Research? How will this work impact our daily lives?

Transportation Research is a rapidly evolving field and its breadth of coverage makes it difficult to pinpoint even a few of the many developments that may be considered new. In a broad sense, there are some very exciting new developments with regard to mitigating the effects of transportation systems on green house gas emissions, the introduction of new technologies to monitor infrastructure, reduce congestion, improve safety and finance transportation systems, and a steady march of new methodological developments to help us better understand how transportation systems work and how they can be improved. All of these efforts have the potential to improve peoples' quality of life and productivity in a significant way.

What would you change about your role as editor or the scientific journal publishing industry if you could?

Today, even more so than in the past, researchers are under pressure to produce a large number of papers. Of course, I have no problem with researchers being highly productive and publishing...and I would certainly encourage this. However, the focus on numbers has encouraged researchers to publish several papers from a single idea instead of single high-quality paper. The publishing industry has accommodated this trend by introducing more journals to absorb the volume of material being generated. To some extent, citation databases have provided some control on this proliferation of publications by only acknowledging specific journals, but these sources are also under this expansionist pressure. To be sure, more research is being generated today than at any time in the past, but I would argue that the increase of published material has far exceeded the increase in new, original work. Thus, I would like to see a trend toward quality and away from quantity.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be a rock star. But the realities of a musician's life and the probability of success kept me from pursuing this aggressively. However, in the mid-1990s I did put a heavy metal band together and we released a CD of 12 songs. If a record company showed serious interest back then, I still would have dropped the whole professor gig in mid-career to pursue the rock-star dream.

Tell me about collaboration. What is the secret to success?

Aside from the technical and intellectual mix of the collaborators which is important to ensure a quality product, perhaps the single most important element is to find collaborators that are passionate about the work.

What gets you up in the morning?

Aside from the obvious (alarm clock), I think the key, for me, is having very broad interests. Thus, each day can be spent on something different to keep perspectives fresh and to avoid monotonous routines.

What is the biggest lesson you've learned in your career?

It is very important to keep a balance between career and family/personal time. In today's environment, I believe many place far too much emphasis on career and I feel this not only has negative impacts on one's family and personal life, but at some level it also adversely affects creative thought and career trajectories. Keeping one's career in perspective is the key to success.

What is your favorite quote?

I would have to say it is Arnold Schwarzenegger's "I'll be back" from the Terminator movies and his other films. Life can deal out all sorts of twists and turns but the persistence implied by this quote is a significant message.

Who or what is your biggest inspiration?

It is simply an underlying self motivation and competitive drive. Everyone has this to varying degrees. It is difficult to say whether it is developed in childhood or is just some innate tendency. But this has been fundamental not only for my career but also for sports and other activities.

What are you currently reading? Would you recommend it? If so, why?

Aside from journal articles and technical material, I do not read very much in what one thinks of in the traditional sense. I do read the World Book Encyclopedia a few minutes before going to bed each night. I find the tidbits of information, short biographies, etc. contained the encyclopedia format to be extremely interesting. So I definitely would recommend this. It gives a breadth of information that really helps to better understand how people think and what motivates human societies.

What is something about yourself you would like other people to know?

I would like other people to know that I have a life beyond transportation research; hobbies, interests, etc. I think it is often far too tempting to simply view researchers by their career achievements. But often times it is their hobbies, interests, and personal life that feeds these professional achievements, so their influence cannot be overlooked.

What do you like to do for fun?

I like to play a variety of games on my XBOX360. This is very relaxing and a great way to keep reflexes sharp. I also enjoy playing electric guitars (I have a nice collection of them), riding motorcycles (high performance sport bikes), driving sports cars, repairing sports cars (my 1969 MGC is a constant source of entertainment in this regard), going to Indy Car, Formula 1 and motorcycle racing events, and occasionally making additions to my model railroading layout.