2024 Observational Studies
OACIP Criteria Form Response
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1 SUMMARY

The Diamond Open Access journal *Observational Studies* is seeking $25,370 annually for three years. In its ninth year of publication, *Observational Studies* has gained tremendous momentum in recent years (from 29,327 hits in 2021 to 113,204 hits in 2023) and the journal needs additional funding to build upon its success and provide an interdisciplinary home for scholars whose work relies on *Observational Studies*. With additional investment, the editorial board believes that the journal has the potential to rival journals such as the *International Journal of Biostatistics* and *the Journal of Causal Inference* in its number of submissions and acceptance rate. This past year, the journal was proud to publish interviews with four of the most influential leaders in causal modelling: James Heckman (Nobel prize winner), Judea Pearl, Jamie Robins, and Don Rubin.

To address the number of high-quality papers it receives, the journal has recently expanded from two issues per year to four, which has required more support and time from the editorial office. Stakeholders’ investments will provide external copy-editing services and editorial office support (in the form of a stipend for graduate student assistant) and will pay for additional publishing and marketing services from partner publisher, the University of Pennsylvania Press. Funds devoted to editorial office support will also help the editorial team build bandwidth to work with scholars whose papers may need additional rounds of revisions (i.e. early career scholars and scholars working in a non-native language).

**OACIP FUNDING GOAL**

$25,370/year for three years totaling $76,110
### Observational Studies

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal Website</td>
<td>Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Established</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Subjects</td>
<td>Statistics, Biostatistics, Criminology, Economics, Education, Epidemiology, Medicine, Political Science, Psychology, Public Health, Public Policy, Sociology</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOAJ Record</td>
<td>DOAJ Record</td>
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<tr>
<td>Editorial Board</td>
<td>Editorial Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issues per Year</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average Number of Articles</td>
<td>30 - 35 per year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publisher</td>
<td>University Of Pennsylvania Press</td>
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<td>Reason for OACIP Funding</td>
<td>To Sustain Diamond OA Publishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual OACIP Funding Goal</td>
<td>$25,370 per year</td>
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3 JOURNAL OVERVIEW

3.1 JOURNAL NAME
Observational Studies

3.2 JOURNAL WEBSITE
https://www.pennpress.org/journals/journal/observational-studies/

3.3 JOURNAL DESCRIPTION
Observational Studies was founded as an open-access journal in 2015 by Dylan Small, Professor and Chair of Statistics and Data Science at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania and an internationally renowned statistician. The role of Editor-in-Chief was passed on in January 2021 to Nandita Mitra, Professor of Biostatistics in the Department of Biostatistics, Epidemiology & Informatics at the Perelman School of Medicine and co-director of the Center for Causal Inference at the University of Pennsylvania. The journal was originally self-published and moved to the University of Pennsylvania Press in 2021. The target audience of the journal is statisticians, biostatisticians, econometricians, epidemiologists and data scientists who develop and apply novel statistical and causal inference methods for observational data. The journal is online-only.

3.4 WHO OWNS THE JOURNAL?
University of Pennsylvania Press

The University of Pennsylvania is a nonprofit Pennsylvania corporation.

3.5 WHO PUBLISHES THE JOURNAL?
University of Pennsylvania Press

3.6 WHAT IS THE JOURNAL’S MISSION?
Mission of Observational Studies. Observational Studies is a Diamond open-access, peer-reviewed, methodologically focused journal that publishes papers on all aspects of Observational Studies. There are many journals that publish results obtained from Observational Studies in domain-specific fields, but this is the first journal that is devoted to the design, development of causal and statistical methods, and analysis of Observational Studies across the wide range of fields that make use of them such as criminology, economics, education, epidemiology, medicine, political science, psychology, public health, public policy, and sociology. Topics include study protocols, statistical and causal inference methodologies, software tutorials, and unique analyses of Observational Studies, as well as descriptions of unique sources of observational data. An understanding of Observational Studies creates a bridge between information gathered in databases and conclusions that drive policy change.

With the recent explosion of the availability of observational data such as electronic health records, cancer registries, Medicare expenditure data, and social media data, the need for methods to analyze...
these data is essential and is the focus of this journal. *Observational Studies* are those that cannot rely on randomization to ensure that the exposure groups (e.g. treatment arms) are similar on all factors that are related to both receiving the treatment and the outcome. *Observational Studies* can include “broken randomized experiments,” in which encouragement to take a treatment is randomly assigned but the treatment itself is not imposed by random assignment (e.g., some people may not comply with the random assignment). Because randomized experimentation is sometimes unethical or infeasible, *Observational Studies* can provide insights and evidence that otherwise may not be obtainable. For example, *Observational Studies* provided the key evidence that smoking causes lung cancer. More recently, many studies of the long-term effectiveness of Covid treatments have relied on observational data.

**Mission of the University of Pennsylvania Press.** The Press disseminates knowledge and advances intellectual inquiry. We collaborate with scholarly communities, foster creative ideas, and give voice to thinkers of diverse backgrounds. As one of the oldest scholarly presses in North America, we publish thought-provoking work to gain a better understanding of our shared past and inform a more just and equitable future. Penn Press’s humanities and social science publications tackle historical and contemporary issues of concern to a broad readership of citizens and scholars, notably including a long-standing commitment to publishing path-breaking work in international human rights.

### 3.7 What discipline(s) does the journal serve?
This journal is highly interdisciplinary. It is used by researchers in statistics, biostatistics, criminology, economics, education, epidemiology, medicine, political science, psychology, public health, public policy, and sociology. If we had to name only one discipline, I would say statistics.

### 3.8 Is this journal considered a flagship journal?
As it's not discipline-specific, the journal does not describe itself as a flagship in any specific discipline. It is the first and only journal devoted to the design and analysis of *Observational Studies*.

### 3.9 How many issues are published each year?
The journal has traditionally been a biannual but, because of a large increase in the number of submissions, it has published four issues in 2023. We plan to continue quarterly publication going forward.

### 3.10 What are the average number of articles published each year?
34 articles appeared in 2023 when 4 issues were published. Prior to that, the journal published an average of 21 articles per year as a biannual.

### 3.11 In what language(s) is the journal published?
English

### 3.12 On what platform is the journal hosted?
Project MUSE: [https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/56/journal/793](https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/56/journal/793)
4 FINANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

4.1 PROVIDE A SNAPSHOT OF RESOURCE AND SOCIETY/PUBLISHER FINANCES.
The journal is owned by the University of Pennsylvania Press, a nonprofit entity that is part of the University of Pennsylvania and reports to the Office of the Provost. The Press has an external advisory board; a faculty editorial board approves book and journal projects.

4.2 HOW IS THE JOURNAL CURRENTLY FUNDED?
The journal is currently in its second year of funding from the Center for Causal Inference at the Perelman School of Medicine at Penn. The center has provided $8,000 per year for three years to cover all publishing functions. The funding was meant to be seed funding and will not be renewed.

4.3 WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR SEEKING FUNDING FOR TRANSITION TO OPEN ACCESS OR CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR OPEN ACCESS PUBLICATION?
The journal was founded on the principle of sharing knowledge without barriers and is committed to the Open Access model. The journal’s editor and editorial board feel strongly that they do not want to move to an APC model; they credit its existing diamond open-access model with the journal’s growth and want to ensure that it continues to reach a wide community of scholars around the world.

4.4 PROVIDE A SUMMARY OF YOUR FUNDING REQUEST THOUGH OACIP. INCLUDE TOTAL DOLLAR VALUE SOUGHT PER YEAR.
We seek $25,370 annually.

4.5 WHAT IS THE JOURNAL’S COMMITMENT TO INNOVATION AND RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT?
The journal’s editor and editorial board are committed to continuing education in their fields. The journal’s publisher provides staff with educational opportunities to ensure that the publishing program meets current best practices. Our partnership with Project MUSE ensures that we meet evolving standards for accessibility and discovery.

4.6 PLEASE DESCRIBE HOW THE JOURNAL DEMONSTRATES OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL STABILITY OR PROVIDE A PLAN FOR SUCH.
With three additional years of funding, the journal will have further established itself, will have gained acceptance into the Web of Science, and will have an established track record to present to potential diamond-model funders. Three additional years will also allow the Society for Causal Inference, founded in 2020, to further establish itself; the growing society has expressed interest in adopting Observational Studies as its official journal. The Observational Studies founder and its current editor are both society officers and view the journal and the society having a shared mission.

Website for the Society for Causal Inference: SOCIETY FOR CAUSAL INFERENCE – Helping Society Make Informed Decisions (sci-info.org)
We strive to keep *Observational Studies* open via a diamond model; we are not currently considering an APC model.

5 **Impact**

5.1 **Disciplinary Impact**

*Observational Studies* is indexed in the Directory of Open Access Journals and in SCOPUS and is under consideration by PubMed and the Web of Science.

*Observational Studies* is the first journal to purely focus on observational studies. Other statistical journals are either broader in scope (e.g. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, *Biometrics*, *Statistics in Medicine*) or are focused on specific areas such as clinical trials (e.g. *Contemporary Clinical Trials*), causal inference (e.g. *Journal of Causal Inference*), or semi-parametric theory (e.g. *International Journal of Biostatistics*).

5.2 **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Impact**

Submissions to *Observational Studies* come from around the world including North American, Europe, Asia, and Africa. In addition, the Editor in Chief has made a special effort to diversify the authorship by inviting women and others who are underrepresented in STEM fields. For instance, in our most widely read special issue, the three invited commentators included two female statisticians and an African American biostatistician.

The journal has a diverse worldwide readership:
5.3 Faculty Impact or Student Success
In 2022, *Observational Studies* had a total of 64,896 hits at Project MUSE, the journal’s online host. Its usage is the highest of any journal published by the University of Pennsylvania Press. In 2023, the journal significantly surpassed last year’s usage with a total of 113,204 views.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Article usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>29,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>64,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>113,204</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Every other year, the journal presents the Cochran Award. The Cochran Paper Award was initiated in 2020 and is named after statistician William Cochran. It is awarded biannually to the best paper published in *Observational Studies* in the prior two years as judged by a committee comprised of the journal’s Editor and Executive Board. Faculty members such as Harvard Professor José Zubizarreta highlight this prestigious award in their promotion materials.

6 Organization and Governance

6.1 What is the governance structure of the journal and, if applicable, the society/publisher.

The journal is owned by the University of Pennsylvania Press, a nonprofit entity that is part of the University of Pennsylvania and reports to the Office of the Provost. The Press has an external advisory board; a faculty editorial board approves book and journal projects.

6.2 Please provide a link to a list of your journal’s editorial board.

https://obs.pennpress.org/about/masthead/

6.3 Provide a statement on editorial independence or whether investors have a say in governance or article selection/journal direction.

Investments do not carry governance input.

The editorial board has complete independence to select articles and determine the journal’s editorial direction.
6.4 **Describe the Journal's Commitment to Advancing Social Justice and Diversity.**

As a member of the Association of University Presses, the University of Pennsylvania Press is part of the Coalition for Diversity and Inclusion in Scholarly Communications (C4DISC). This Coalition of publishing and library associations was founded to build equity, diversity, and accessibility in scholarly communications. Penn Press seeks to promote equity, inclusion, and accessibility in all its publishing practices. The Press has representation on the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility committee of the Society for Scholarly Publishing and in the leadership of C4DISC’s Toolkits for Equity initiative.

The executive editorial board of the journal is majority (67%) female. Women are traditionally underrepresented in the mathematical sciences. Moreover, the editorial board is racially and geographically diverse.

7 **Policies and Standards**

7.1 **What is the Journal's Peer Review Process?**

Our peer review process is rigorous and typical of statistical journals. The Editor-in-Chief reviews all submissions first for appropriateness and fit. If the manuscript is not desk-rejected, the EIC then invites an Associate Editor (from the Editorial Board) to handle soliciting peer review for the paper. This AE requests 2-4 reviewers with expertise in the topic area to review the paper and provide a written report. The AE then makes a recommendation to the EIC: reject, major revisions, minor revisions, or accept. The EIC makes all final decisions. We use the single anonymized model of peer review, where the authors do not know the identities of the reviewers, but the reviewers do see the authors’ names and affiliations.

7.2 **Is Your Journal Indexed on DOAJ?**

Yes. [https://doaj.org/toc/2767-3324](https://doaj.org/toc/2767-3324)

7.3 **Describe the Journal's Author Rights Retention Policy.**

The journal follows the Directory of Open Access Journals’ best practices for author rights and licensing. The author can choose to maintain copyright or transfer it to the publisher; we also use a Creative Commons license (CC BY NC 4.0) to inform readers how the content can be used.

7.4 **What Copyright is Assigned to the Journal Articles?**

The journal follows the Directory of Open Access Journals’ best practices for author rights and licensing. The author can choose to maintain copyright or transfer it to the publisher; we also use a Creative Commons license (CC BY NC 4.0) to inform readers how the content can be used.

7.5 **Describe How the Journal is Compliant with Relevant Technical Standards.**

Hosted by Project MUSE, the journal meets industry-standard technical requirements. Project MUSE:

- partners with LOCKSS and PORTICO for preservation
partners with Google and Google Scholar to ensure that MUSE meets their scholarly content indexing requirements and, as appropriate, to roll out new technology and connections for our users, such as mobile quick abstracts, branding for the MUSE platform, and CASA enhancement

partners with library vendors to ensure coverage in knowledge bases and discovery systems and enhance discovery by linking agreements with partners such as the Modern Language Association

8  ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

8.1  TOP 10 MOST-READ ARTICLES IN 2023

These articles have had the most usage on Project MUSE in 2023.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Article views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimating Treatment Effects with Causal Forests: An Application</td>
<td>Susan Athey; Stefan Wager</td>
<td>9,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with Jamie Robins</td>
<td>Jamie Robins</td>
<td>3,833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with James Heckman</td>
<td>James J. Heckman</td>
<td>2,966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causal Inference: History, Perspectives, Adventures, and Unification (An Interview with Judea Pearl)</td>
<td>Judea Pearl</td>
<td>2,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lmtp: An R Package for Estimating the Causal Effects of Modified Treatment Policies</td>
<td>Iván Díaz; Nicholas Williams</td>
<td>1,929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gesttools: General Purpose G-Estimation in R</td>
<td>Bianca De Stavola; Daniel Tompsett; Oliver Dukes; Stijn Vansteelandt</td>
<td>1,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When black box algorithms are (not) appropriate</td>
<td>Jordan Rodu; Michael Baiocchi</td>
<td>1,688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regression-Discontinuity Designs as Local Randomized Experiments</td>
<td>Donald L. Thistlewaite; Donald T. Campbell</td>
<td>1,463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causal Methods Madness: Lessons Learned from the 2022 ACIC Competition to Estimate Health Policy Impacts</td>
<td>Dan R.C. Thal and Mariel M. Finucane</td>
<td>1,447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breiman's Two Cultures: A Perspective from Econometrics</td>
<td>Guido Imbens and Susan Athey</td>
<td>1,419</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Last update: February 19, 2024