

2020: Annual Report to the CAG/ACG on *The Canadian Geographer – Le Géographe canadien*

Overview

This is my tenth year of editing *The Canadian Geographer-Le Géographe Canadien* – which is a very long time by any standards. During the first few years, I initiated many changes including the redesign of our graphics, changes in workflow, and expansion of the categories of papers that we welcome. In the last few years, we have ported the journal completely online, changed the graphic design again (to facilitate reading on devices), and worked to make more papers freely accessible. The world of academic publishing changes very quickly and we strive to respond to challenges as they arise. As an editorial team we also welcome opportunities to enhance the content and dissemination of our journal. This report summarizes our position in the industry and in the discipline of geography. It also focuses on persistent challenges as well as emerging trends. Additionally, this report summarizes and explains a number of metrics that describe the situation at *The Canadian Geographer-Le Géographe Canadien* at the end of 2020.

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Emphasis in 2020

The editorial team is always trying to improve and enhance the content and reach of *The Canadian Geographer-Le Géographe Canadien (TCG-LGC)*. We are uniquely positioned, and at times challenged, as a small journal representing a society (Canadian Association of Geographers) in a country with a relatively small population. However, our chief challenges are the competition from Open Access publishing—which is mandatory in many domains and countries—as well as the rise of very specific niche journals. Our editorial team (myself, our editorial assistant, and our excellent board) are constantly aware of these and other changes to the landscape of academic publishing and work hard to respond to these and other challenges.

Our operations as a journal over this last year were inevitably affected by the pandemic. Our usual challenges securing reviewers was amplified, and deadlines were more often missed by authors and reviewers alike as we all worked to adjust and adapt to the reality of co-existing with COVID-19. For example, authors who committed to contribute to a special section related to the pandemic, largely defaulted and two of the papers that were submitted were withdrawn because the authors did not feel they had the time to make the requested revisions. These trends affected all our metrics this year.

Overall, our submission numbers were down in 2020. This was the primary focus of our annual strategy meeting with Wiley in September last year. We identified a number of initiatives to keep *TCG-LGC* well-positioned. These include a new practice of selecting two articles each month to make freely available for a month and promoting these through social media. We have also sharpened our focus on special sections and have a number of commitments from key leaders in our field to lead such sections for *TCG-LGC* over the next three years. Additionally, we are working to increase the French content in our journal—and to that end, our French editor has agreed to lead a special section and has graciously undertaken the critical task of translating some of our key author tools (Style Guide, Author Guidelines) into French. These will be implemented by summer 2021.

We have found that special sections have worked well, both for the journal and for the authors who contribute. There is an efficiency and focus to the submission-review-production process, it exposes new authors and reviewers to the journal, and enables *TCG-LGC* to provide current content on key issues of the day. In 2020, we ran four special sections including the “David Ley Special Forum.” We encourage Canadian (and international) geographers to submit ideas for special sections. This is an opportunity to collate papers that generate conversations and a range of ideas related to a specific topic. Special section papers are available to read, distribute, and cite as soon as they are posted to Wiley’s EarlyView.

Every year I recount our chief difficulty—finding reviewers. Understandably, but no less regrettably, 2020 proved a remarkably trying year in this regard, as noted above. We had to settle for two reviewers on some manuscripts, and had higher-than-usual numbers of reviewers who declined to review revisions. This trend fights against our goal to reduce the time from submission to publication. This is a challenge we need to overcome, as increasingly the expectation from authors is that turnaround at each stage of the process will be rapid. Twenty years ago, it was normal and expected that a paper might take up to a year from submission to publication. In the age of rapid Open Access publishing, such timelines are now the exception. Indeed, fast turn-around times from submission to publication make science and social science more relevant. But to achieve this, we need reviewers. We urge Canadian geographers to accept reviewer requests. We also offer our profound thanks to the members of our editorial board and broader community who regularly and generously review for us. It has been a longstanding tradition for us to publish a salute to our reviewers, which we have done bi-annually. Starting in 2021, we intend to do this at the end of each calendar year.

Manuscript Submissions

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
English manuscripts	66	53	39	63	69	61	68	68	40
French manuscripts	9	2	5	1	8	5	6	3	6
TOTAL	75	55	44	64	75	66	74	71	46

Table one: Original manuscript submissions 2013–2020.

The submission count for 2020 shows a marked decrease from the previous year, although there was a slight increase in French submissions. We have had low submission years before, and we are confident that once the more intense period of the pandemic has passed and academic life once gain takes on a semblance of normalcy, these numbers will tick up again.

While our submission count was down, 2020 was a strong year in terms of special sections. We ran four of these last year, starting the year with *Indigenous spatial capital: Incorporating First People’s knowledges, places, and relations into mapping processes* which was guest-edited by Caroline Desbiens, Irène Hirt, and Béatrice Collignon. In the third issue of the year, we ran *Smart citizens creating smart cities: Locating citizen participation in the smart city*, guest-edited by Rina Ghose and Peter Johnson. Our final issue of 2020 had two special sections. Stacy Warren guest-edited a section focused on education: *Teaching Critical GIS | Teaching GIS critically*. The issue opened with a twist on a special section—a unique “omnibus” paper featuring a forum with David Ley and his former students, including Alison Mountz, Pablo Mendez, Loretta Less, Margaret Walton-Roberts, and Ilse Helbrecht.

There were 27 book review submissions in 2020, a doubling of the submission count from the previous year.

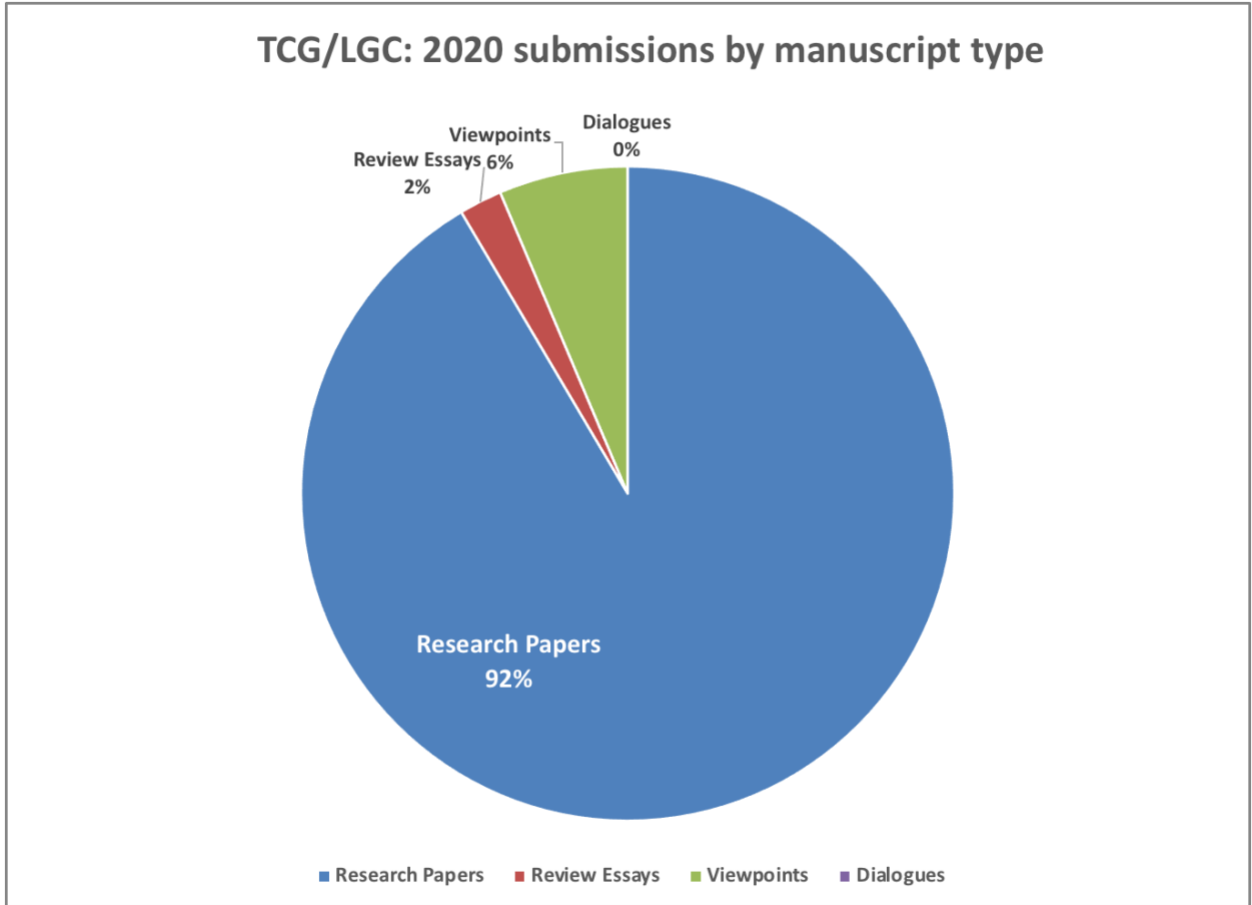


Figure one: Original submissions, by type in 2020. Research papers continue to be the primary manuscript type submitted to our journal.

Dispositions

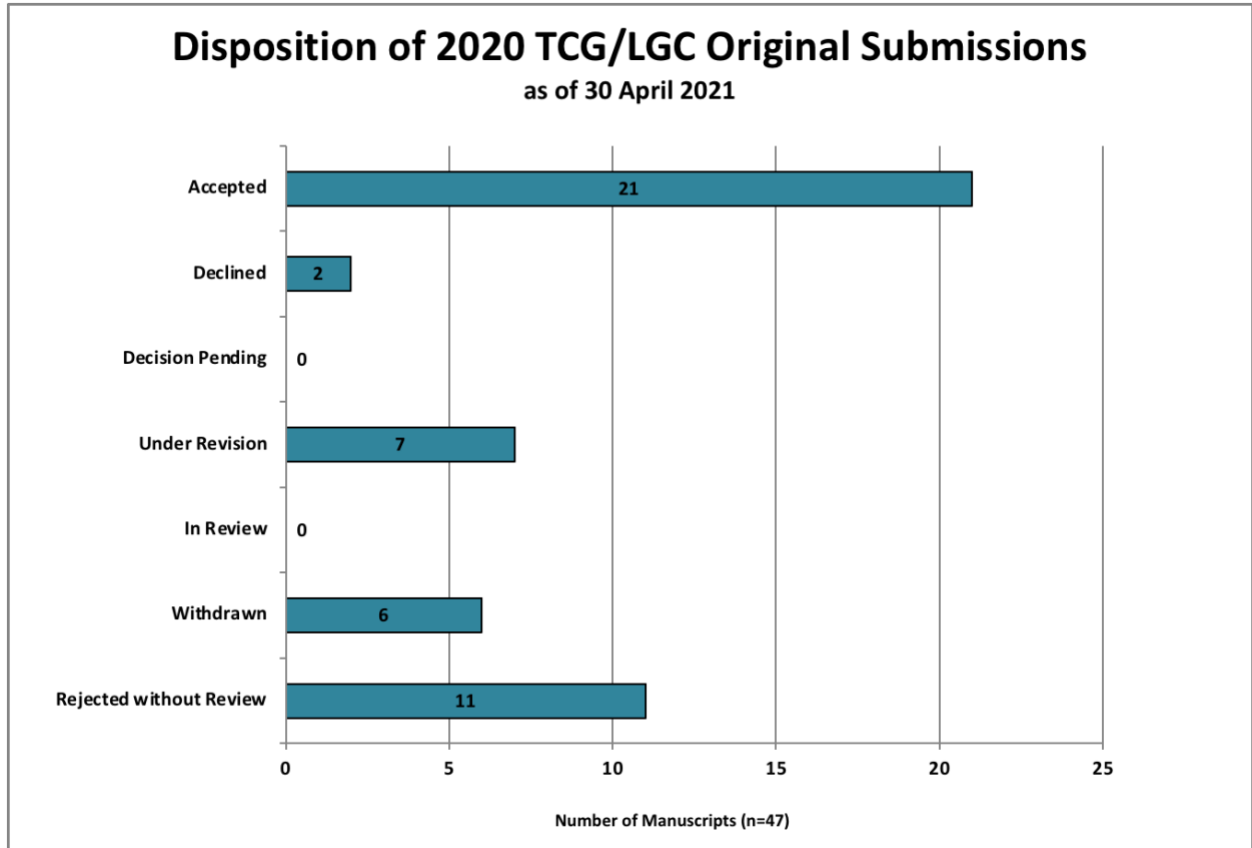


Figure two: Disposition of original manuscripts in 2020.

Our acceptance rate for 2020 submissions that have received a final decision (n=34) by time of writing is 62%, down from a unusually high rate of 76% for 2019 submissions. The high rate in 2019 reflected the high percentage of manuscripts receiving decisions that were contributions to special sections. In the 2020 decisions, there were fewer manuscripts targeted for the special sections and a very high percentage of “Reject without Review” decisions for an unusually high number of inappropriate manuscripts (n=11) submitted.

Reviewing

2020 was one of the most difficult years we have experienced during my tenure, with regard to securing reviewers, getting reviews in on time, and having reviewers agree to see a manuscript through a round of revision. This comes as no surprise as our fellow academics and experts in the field had to adjust to new teaching and researching protocols, and deal with managing the pandemic in their personal lives. We had little choice but to go with the flow—and grant extra time when requested, and accept defaults as part of the price of doing business in our first year working with COVID-19.

Despite the issues we were not able to control, we decided in the autumn that we needed to take steps to try and reduce our time spent finding reviewers in an effort to adjust what we could. To that end, we started the practice of issuing more than 3 initial invitations from the outset and settling for 2 reviewers much earlier in the reviewer-invitation process. We are hoping that this will start to make a difference in 2021.

Given these challenges, we anticipated our time from submission to original decision would increase over the previous year but in fact it was essentially the same. In 2019, the average submission-to-decision time was 79 days; in 2020, the average was 78 days for all submissions, dropping the immediate desk rejects out of the calculation. We continue to strive to find ways to reduce this further—our goal is 60 days.

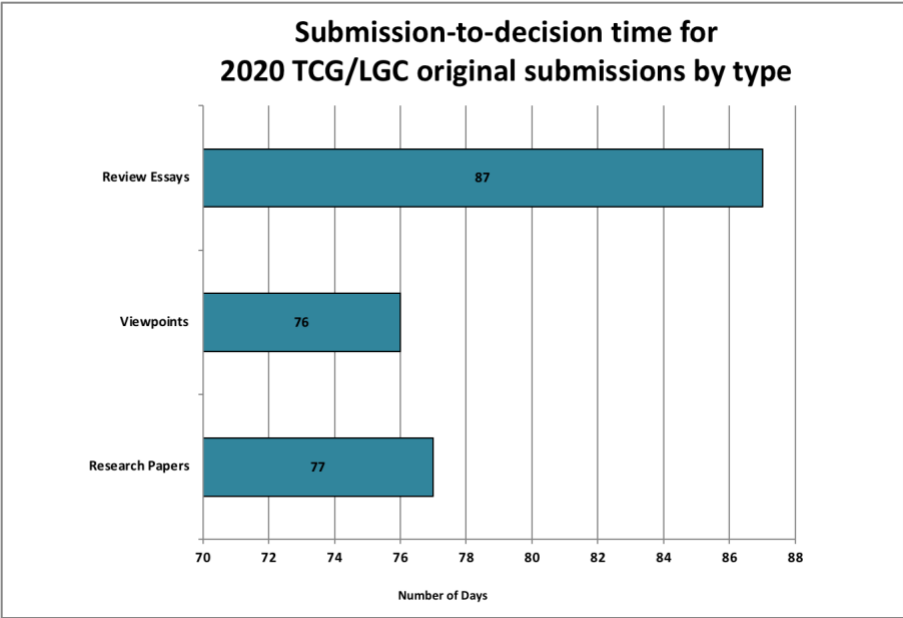


Figure three: Days from first submission to decision for 2020 submissions, based on paper type.

Bibliometrics and rankings

ISI impact factors and rankings are reported in late June for the preceding year. The *TCG-LGC* impact factor for 2019 was calculated as a quotient in the following way:

$$\frac{\text{Number of citations in 2019 to } TCG-LGC \text{ articles published in 2018 and 2019}}{\text{Number of source items published in 2018 and 2019}}$$

Our most recent Impact Factor is for 2019 and is 1.032. This is a considerable improvement over low point in 2002 and our more recent trough in 2015 and 2016 when the impact factor dropped to 0.88 and 0.89. However, it is a decrease from 2017 when our impact factor reached an all-time high of 1.477 and a slight dip from last year when it was 1.141.

ISI Rankings are published by Thomson-Reuters as Journal Citation Reports, a part of the Web of Science.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
ISI Impact Factor	0.426	0.561	1.263	1.172	1.179	0.878	0.896	1.477	1.141	1.032

Table two: Journal Citation Reports Rankings and Impact Factors from 2010 to 2019.

We are keenly aware of the importance of impact factors. We wait with anticipation for the impact factor to be released every June. Moreover, we work very hard to attract “citable” papers by “star” authors while also working to fulfill our mission to Canadian geographers in general. On the other hand, we remain cognizant of the fact that Geography is a small discipline and we are the flagship journal for the small discipline in a small country. These two defining factors mean that we will always struggle to increase our impact. There is simply a smaller pool of potential authors to cite papers.

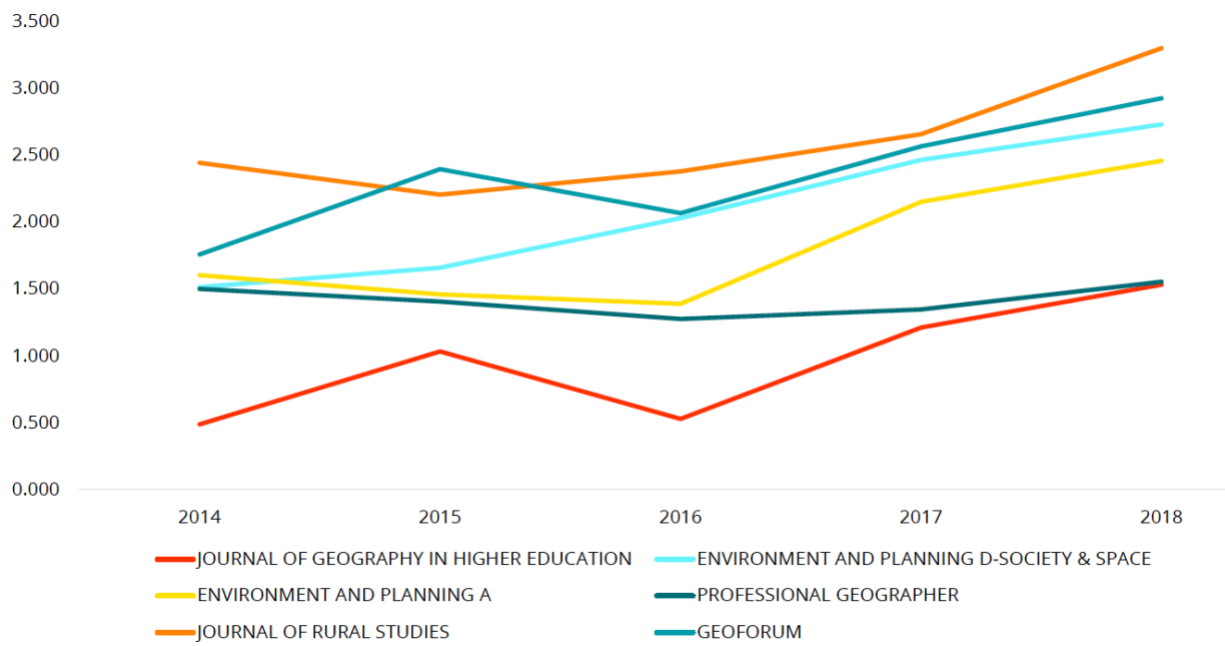


Figure four: Comparable journals and their impact factors between 2014 and 2018. Note that our impact factor compares with that of the *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* as well as that of the *Professional Geographer*.

Academic citations

Academic citations remain the most important metric attributed to papers – as they are the basis for assessment of impact factor. For calculation of the 2019 impact factor, the top-cited paper was from a special section on Critical Physical Geography. The second most cited paper was Sarah de Leeuw’s paper on Writing as it pertains to truth and reconciliation on indigenous issues in Canada.

Article	Lead Author	Institute	Country	Issue	Year	2019 Cites
Slow science, the geographical expedition, and Critical Physical Geography	LANE, S	Universite de Lausanne	Switzerland	61:1	2017	7
Writing as righting: Truth and reconciliation, poetics, and new geo-graphing in colonial Canada	DE LEEUW, S	University of Northern British Columbia	Canada	61:3	2017	6
Core themes in textbook definitions of physical geography	DAY, T	OKANAGAN COLL	Canada	61:1	2017	5
Exploring e-bikes as a mode of sustainable transport: A temporal qualitative study of the perspectives of a sample of novice riders in a Canadian city	EDGE, S	Ryerson University	Canada	62:3	2018	3
Operating anew: Queering GIS with good enough software	GIESEKING, J	The University of Dublin Trinity College	Ireland	62:1	2018	3
Critical GIS as a tool for social transformation	PAVLOVSKAYA, M	Hunter College	United States	62:1	2018	3
"Made in Canada": Local production networks in the Canadian fashion industry	BRYDGES, T	Uppsala Universitet	Sweden	62:2	2018	3
Climate change and resource development impacts in watersheds: Insights from the Nechako River Basin, Canada	PICKETTS, I	QUEST UNIV CANADA	Canada	61:2	2017	3
Going unscripted: A call to critically engage storytelling methods and methodologies in geography and the medical-health sciences	DE LEEUW, S	University of Northern British Columbia	Canada	61:2	2017	3
Practice-based spillover effects: Evidence from Calgary's municipal food and yard waste recycling pilot	WONNECK, L	University of Oxford	United Kingdom	61:3	2017	3

Table three: Top cited papers used for the calculation of the 2019 impact factor – the most recent that we have received. These papers must, by definition, be published during the two preceding years.

Institutional subscriptions and access to *TCG-LGC* worldwide

On the upside, our download numbers are trending up and *TCG-LGC* articles continue to be downloaded around the world – as illustrated in Figure five. Wiley is largely responsible for our impressive download rates as they market the journal through social media as well as email campaigns and through their international consortiums of journals that are sold to libraries. Figure six shows the top ten countries where downloads of our papers are happening.

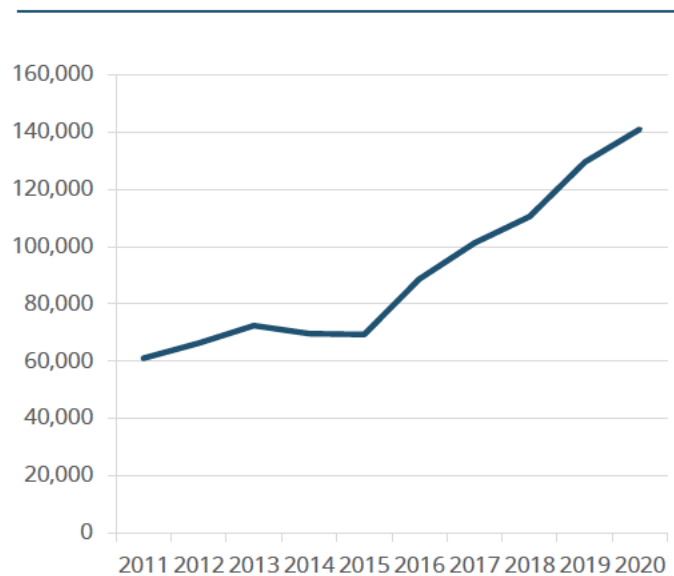


Figure five: Article download trends remain very positive.

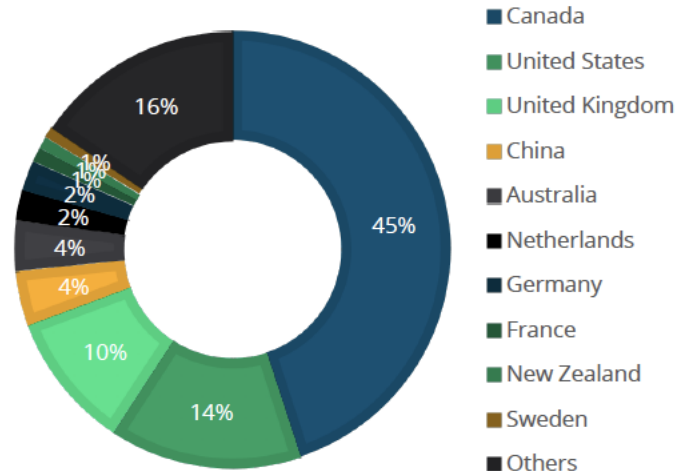


Figure six: Top ten countries that download papers from our journal. Clearly Canadian scholars and researchers are our chief audience followed by the US and the UK.

It is not a surprise to see that Canadians are the chief source of article submissions as well as downloads. Figure seven illustrates author country origins.

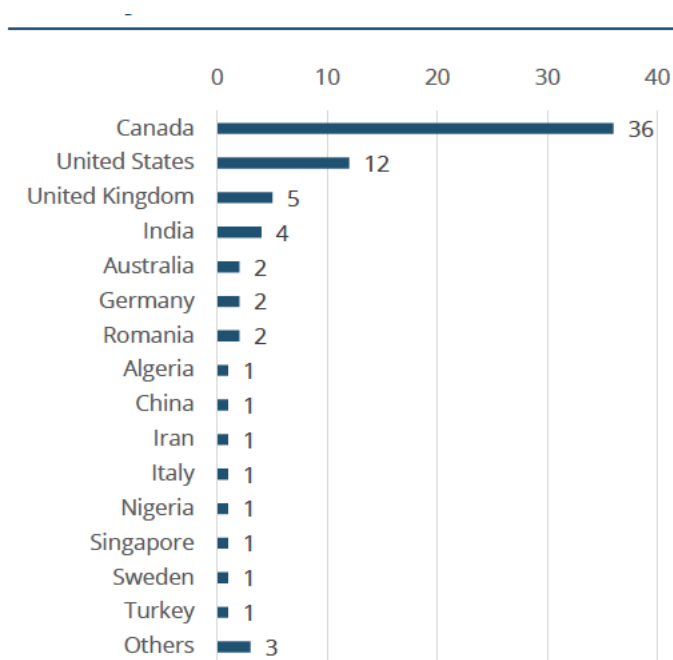


Figure seven: Top 15 countries from which articles submissions are made.

The ten most downloaded papers in 2020 are from a surprising range of years past, again demonstrating that the 2 year and 5 year impact factors are not really relevant to *TCG-LGC*. Our papers have a much longer life than two years in terms of relevance.

Rank	Author(s)	Article Title	Volume	Issue	No. of Accesses
1	Shah, T. et al.	Geographic accessibility to primary care providers: Comparing rural and urban areas in Southwestern Ontario	64	1	2,554
2	Werf, P. et al.	Food for naught: Using the theory of planned behaviour to better understand household food wasting behaviour	63	3	2,469
3	Lepawsky, J. & McNabb, C.	Mapping international flows of electronic waste	54	2	1,766
4	Slater, T.	Municipally managed gentrification in South Parkdale, Toronto	48	3	1,612
5	Malik, K. et al.	Reconstruction of past backyard skating seasons in the Original Six NHL cities from citizen science data	64	4	1,345
6	Lave, R. et al.	Intervention: Critical physical geography	58	1	989
7	Ricker, B. et al.	When open data and data activism meet: An analysis of civic participation in Cape Town, South Africa	64	3	977
8	Castleden, H. et al.	"I spent the first year drinking tea": Exploring Canadian university researchers' perspectives on community-based participatory research involving Indigenous peoples	56	2	963
9	Jones, C. & Ley, D.	Transit-oriented development and gentrification along Metro Vancouver's low-income SkyTrain corridor	60	1	905
10	Andresen, M.	A spatial analysis of crime in Vancouver, British Columbia: a synthesis of social disorganization and routine activity theory	50	4	887

Figure eight: The ten most downloaded papers in 2020.

Altmetrics and the use of media exposure to measure relevance

Large publishing companies have started keeping track of which articles get media and social media exposure. This is another way to measure relevance especially outside of the academic community. A number of papers published by *TCG-LGC* have attracted such exposure as illustrated in Table four below. Clearly broadcasting newly published papers on social media will increase our Altmetric scores.

Score	Author(s)	Article title	doi
56	Malik, P., McLeman, R., Robertson, C., and Lawrence, H.	Reconstruction of past backyard skating seasons in the Original Six NHL cities from citizen science data	https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12640
35	Hoicka, C. E., and Das, R.	Ambitious deep energy retrofits of buildings to accelerate the 1.5°C energy transition in Canada	https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12637
20	Lewis, D., Castleden, H., Apostle, R., Francis, S., and Francis-Strickland, K.	Linking land displacement and environmental dispossession to Mi'kmaw health and well-being: Culturally relevant place-based interpretive frameworks matter	https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12656
17	Graham, N., and Pottier-Sherman, Y.	The experiences of immigrant entrepreneurs in a medium-sized Canadian city: The case of St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada	https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12627
14	Aldred, T.-L., Alderfer-Mumma, C., de Leeuw, S., Farrales, M., Greenwood, M., Hoogeveen, D., O'Toole, R., Parkes, M. W., and Sloan Morgan, V.	Mining sick: Creatively unsettling normative narratives about industry, environment, extraction, and the health geographies of rural, remote, northern, and Indigenous communities in British Columbia	https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12660
14	Hackett, P., Abonyi, S., and Engler-Stringer, R.	Revealing circumstances of epidemiologic transition among Indigenous peoples: The case of the Keg River (Alberta) Métis	https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12651
12	Katz-Rosene, R. M.	A not-so-green choice? The high carbon footprint of long-distance passenger rail travel in Canada	https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12649
12	Ricker, B., Cinnamon, J., and Dierwechter, Y.	When open data and data activism meet: An analysis of civic participation in Cape Town, South Africa	https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12608
12	Youdelis, M., Nakoochee, R., O'Neil, C., Lunstrum, E., and Roth, R.	"Wilderness" revisited: Is Canadian park management moving beyond the "wilderness" ethic?	https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12600
11	Giancarlo, A.	Indigenous student labour and settler colonialism at Brandon Residential School	https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12613

Table four: Articles, published in 2020, with the highest Altmetric scores.

Final word

TCG-LGC remains in a strong position in terms of metrics, marketing, and readership. We continue to attract readers, citations, and downloads. This is comforting given the immense changes facing the academic publish industry including Open Access journals and a proliferation of publishing choices. Our aim is to hold this course in 2021 and beyond.

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