

# Journal of Biblical Literature Analysis

January 2019

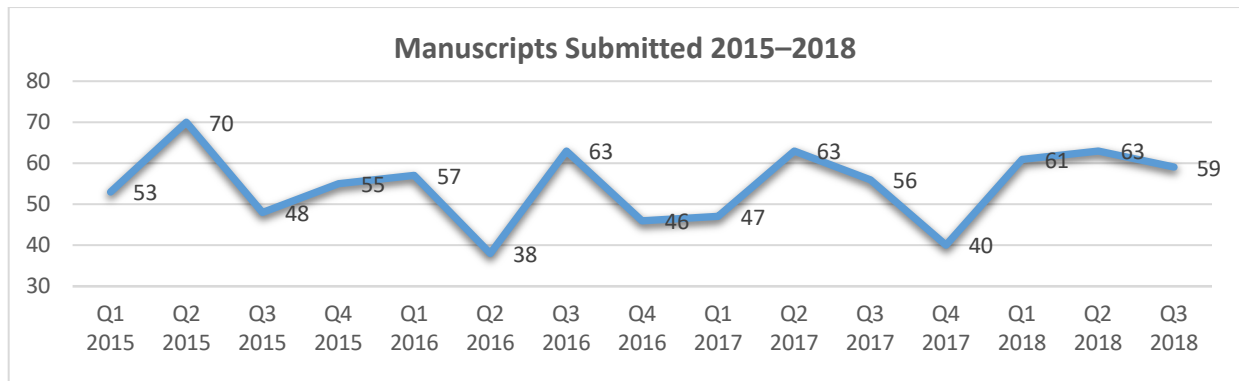
This report is the first result of an ongoing analysis of the *Journal of Biblical Literature (JBL)*. It provides an examination of *JBL* structured around the main stages in the *Journal's* operation: (1) submission, (2) peer review, (3) production and publication, and (4) reception and impact. Submission numbers remain strong, with more manuscripts submitted in each of the last five years than every year prior. The past five years have seen modest gains in manuscripts submitted by women and scholars outside the USA. The average time to decision over the past three years is a little over five months, with fluctuations tied to the number of submissions. An acceptance rate of 23 percent over the past three years shows that *JBL* is highly selective. Time to publication of accepted articles has improved in the past two years, so that it now takes less than a year for an accepted article to be published. Despite gradual decreases in subscription numbers, *JBL's* online usage is rising. Citation metrics also confirm that *JBL* remains in the top tier for its area.

## 1. Submission Statistics

Over time, the level of submission data we have been tracking has steadily increased. Thus our best dataset begins in 2015, with the move to the Scholastica digital platform. Unless otherwise noted, the following statistics are based on manuscripts submitted from January 2015 and later. We have some historical submissions data preserved in previous reports (mostly at the annual level), but most of it does not correspond with the specific types of data recorded from early 2015 onward. Additionally, for much of the time prior to this, statistics were reported for “report years” rather than calendar years. Due to the switch from report year to calendar year, 2012 is not reflected in these statistics. This was the year the reporting transition took place, coinciding with the beginning of Adele Reinhartz’s tenure as general editor.

### 1.1. Total Submissions

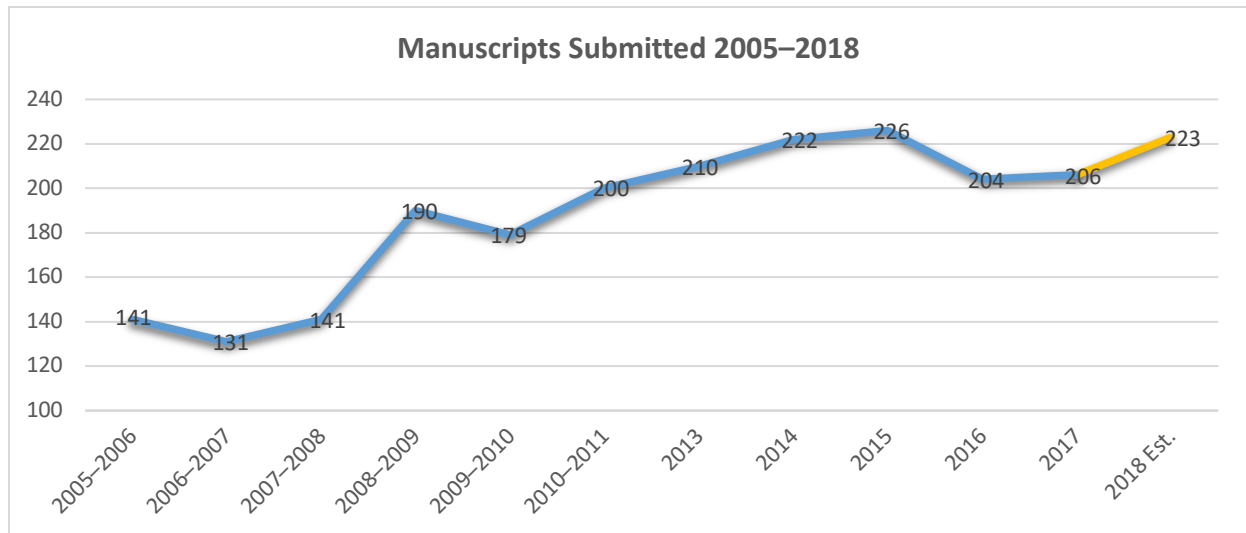
At the time of writing this report, 183 manuscripts had been submitted to *JBL* in 2018. Submission numbers have been consistently high in all three quarters this year, as shown in the following chart.<sup>1</sup>



Submissions are generally lower in Q4, but even if we estimate a low figure of 40 submissions in 2018 Q4, this yields a total of 223 submissions, putting 2018 on track to be among the years with the highest number of submissions recorded (2014, 2015). The trend toward increasing submissions since 2005 is reflected in the chart on the following page.

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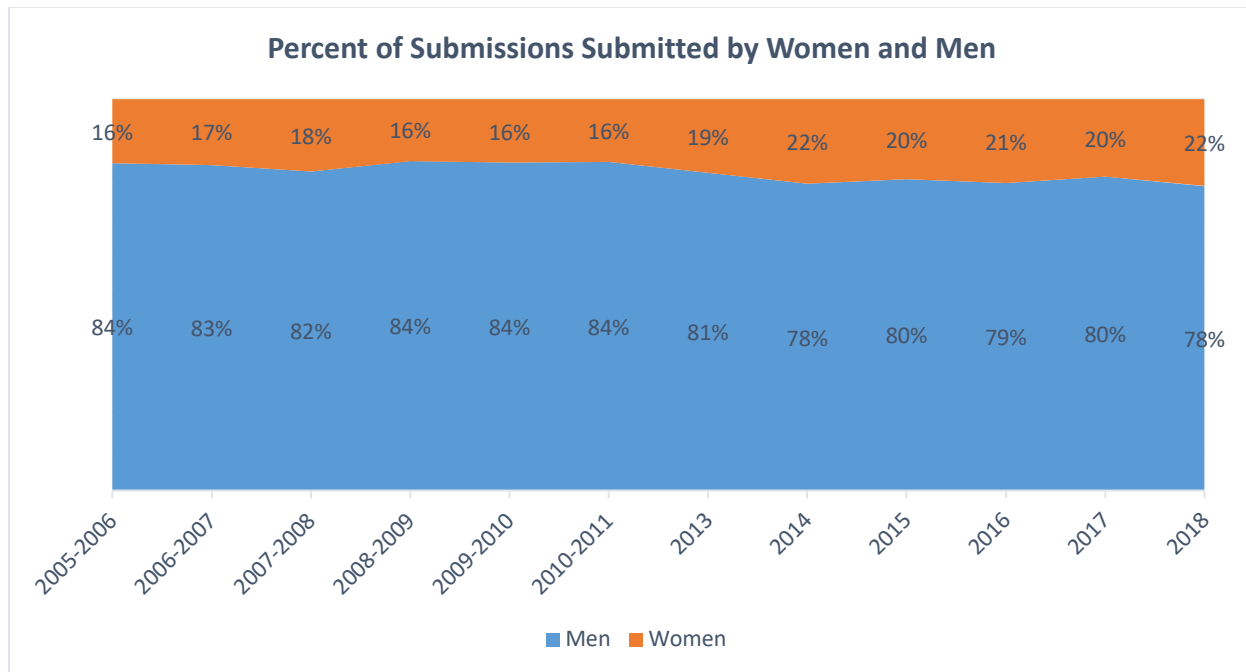
1. There were still six days remaining in September when this portion of the report was written, so this number will likely rise slightly.



## 1.2. Submission Demographics

### 1.2.1. Submissions by Gender

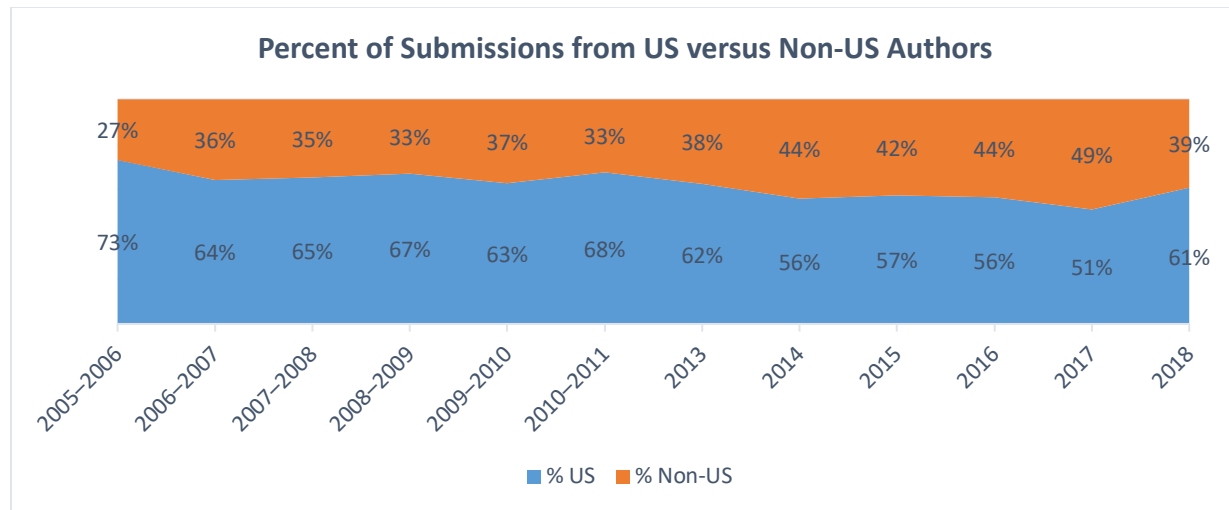
Since 2014, the percentage of submissions submitted by women authors has consistently been around 20 percent.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, every year from 2013 on has seen a greater share of manuscript submissions by women compared with the period 2005–2011. The percentage of submissions by women in 2018 is higher than in 2017, but only time will tell if this is a natural variation or a continued upward trend.



2. For the purpose of these calculations, submissions coauthored by one or more women and one or more men count as one for each category.

### 1.2.2. Submissions by Authors' Location

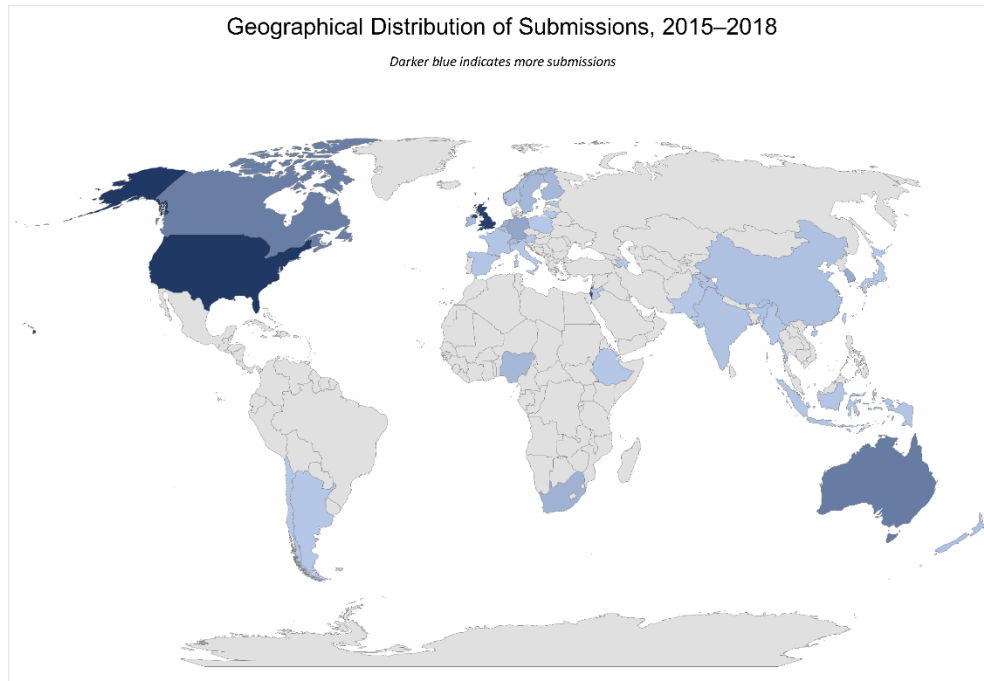
To the extent possible, *JBL* records the location of authors *at the time of submission*.<sup>3</sup> This is not a true indicator of the prospective authors' place of birth or nationality, since many scholars take up academic posts outside the country of their birth. It is, nevertheless, a rough indicator of the attractiveness of *JBL* outside the country from which it is published. Over the period 2005–2018 there seems to be an overall increase in the number and percentage of submissions from scholars based outside the United States. In 2017, nearly half the submissions came from outside the United States; however, in 2018 the percentage is down to 39 percent. At this point it is too early to determine the cause for this decrease and whether it is a true downward trend or simply a natural variation.



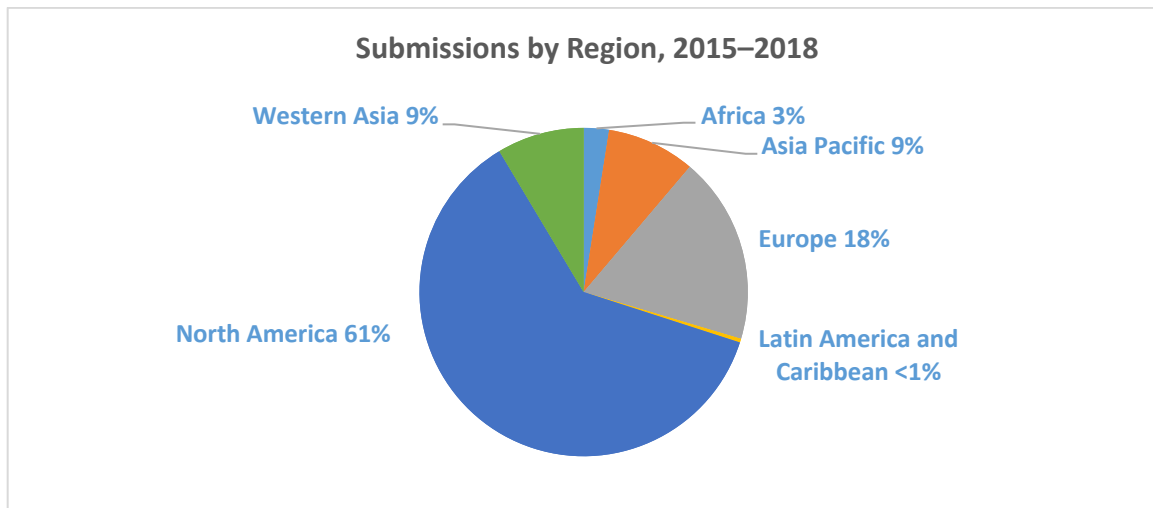
For the period 2015–2018, we have more detailed statistics on the specific countries from which scholars have submitted manuscripts to *JBL*. For this entire period, there were 458 US submissions (56%) and 360 non-US submissions (44%). Non-US submissions include the following countries: United Kingdom (67); Israel (67); Australia (37); Canada (36); Germany (17); unknown (15); South Korea (14); the Netherlands (12); South Africa (11); Nigeria (8); Finland (8); Sweden (8); Ireland (7); Switzerland (7); Norway (5); Belgium (5); China (4); New Zealand (4); India (3); Austria (2) Spain (2); France (2); Indonesia (2); Hong Kong (2); Japan (1); Barbados (1); Poland (1); Lithuania (1); Ethiopia (1); Azerbaijan (1); Pakistan (1); Chile (1); Jordan (1); Estonia (1); Taiwan (1); Myanmar (1).

The map on the following page plots the 2015–2018 submission data on a world map, thus showing the regions from which scholars submit manuscripts to *JBL*.

3. This is not a mandatory field for prospective authors, so in some cases *JBL* staff is unable to determine the location of an author with confidence. This is quite rare, however—only fourteen times in 2015–2017 and not at all in 2018.

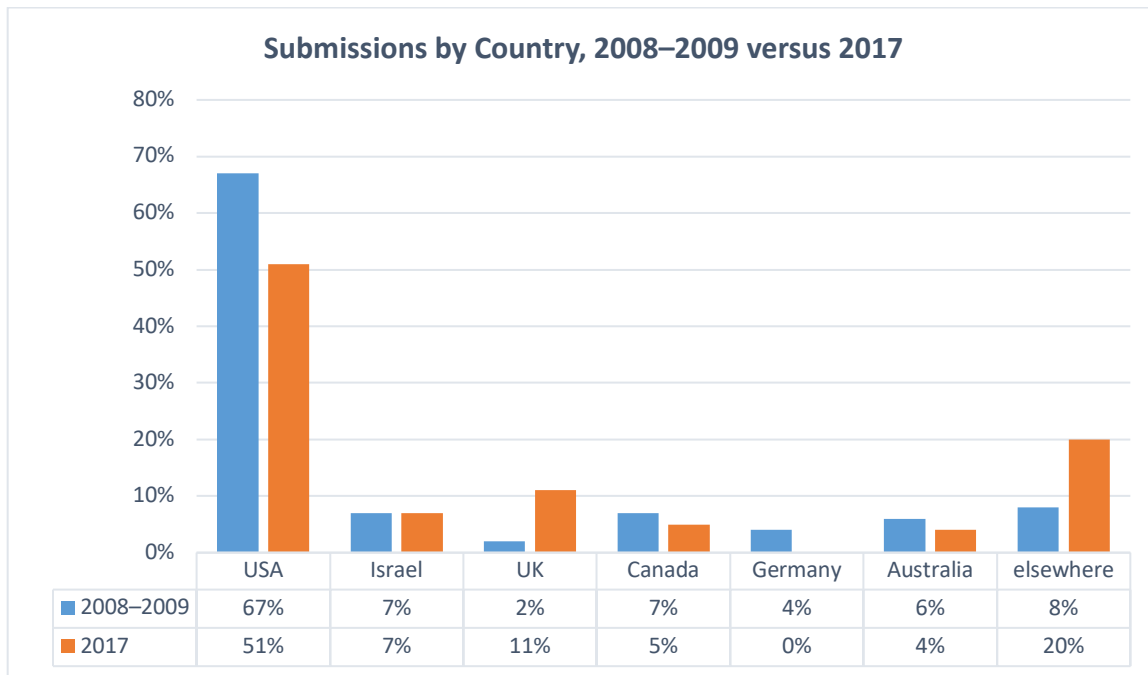


One should note that every continent is represented. When submissions are calculated together regionally (see the following chart), North America continues to submit by far the most articles, followed by Europe. We are also seeing a significant number of submissions from scholars located in a broadly defined Asia Pacific region. The submissions from this region are approximately equal to those of Western Asia, which is predominantly represented by Israel. A few scholars working in Africa have submitted manuscripts, while Latin America and the Caribbean are by far the most underrepresented.<sup>4</sup>



4. The regions used here are adapted from the United Nations geoscheme, based on the M49 Standard (<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>). Smaller regions were combined to form the larger regions used above. The Asia Pacific region used here combines the Southern Asian, Eastern Asian, and Southeastern Asian regions with Australia, New Zealand, and Melanesia. Roughly half of the Asia Pacific submissions come from Australia.

To give a sense of change over time, we can compare data from the 2008–2009 annual report with the 2017 submissions (the most recent complete year).



Aside from the largely decreased share contributed by the US, it is striking how much Germany's percentage has decreased (in raw numbers, there were 7 submissions from Germany in 2009 versus only 1 in 2017); Germany is no longer in the top countries for number of submissions.<sup>5</sup> Even more significant is the increase in submissions from the UK (from 3 to 23). Israel, Canada, and Australia, whose percentages have changed slightly, remain the other most significant contributors. The 21 percent from elsewhere in 2017 can be broken down as follows:

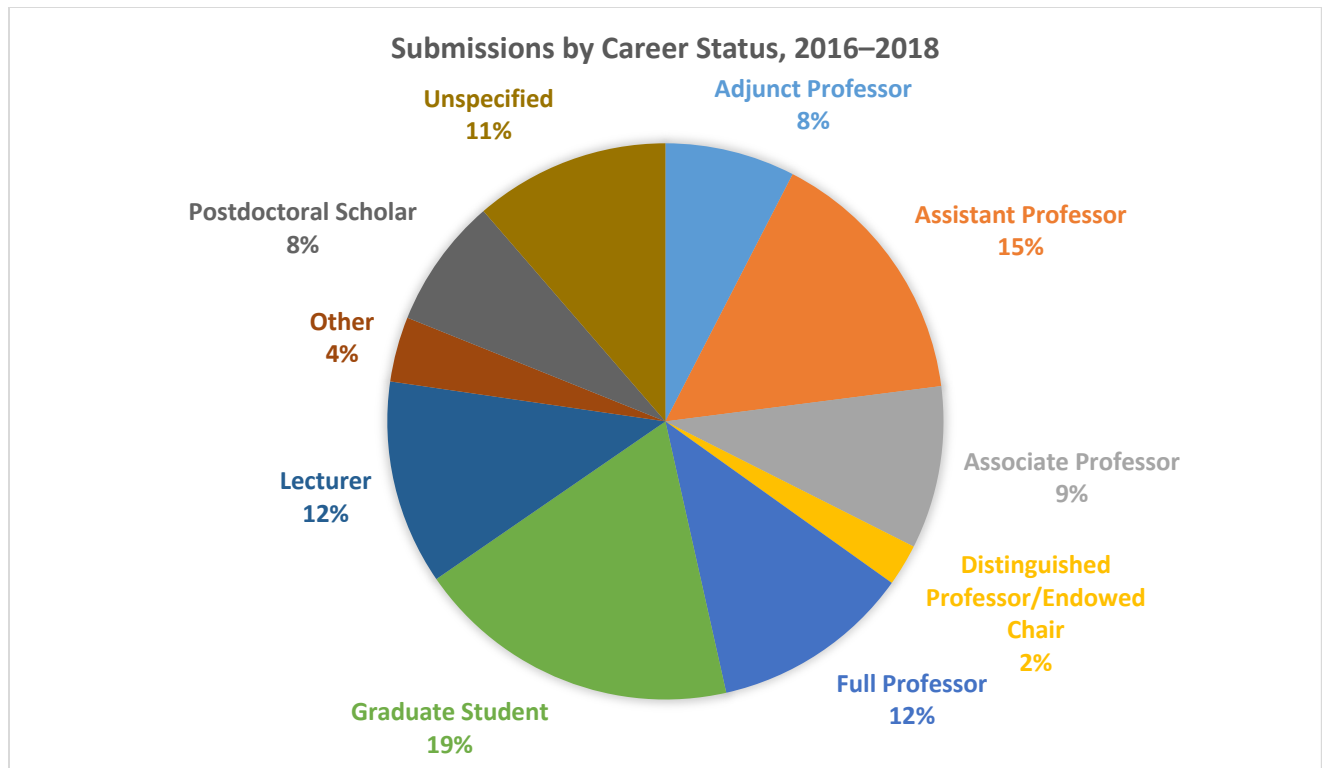
Netherlands: 6; Sweden: 5; Finland: 4; South Korea: 4; Ireland: 3; Nigeria: 3; China: 2; India: 2; Indonesia: 2; New Zealand: 2; South Africa: 2; Austria: 1; Azerbaijan: 1; Belgium (with coauthor in Israel): 1; Norway: 1; Spain: 1; Switzerland: 1; unknown: 1.

In the end, although scholars in English-speaking countries submit by far the most manuscripts, *JBL* attracts authors from around the globe.

### 1.2.3. Submissions by Career Status

*JBL* receives submissions by scholars across the career spectrum. We began tracking this data in 2016, which does not provide a long enough time period for comparison over time. Career status is self-reported and is often difficult to determine when an author does not report it. As a result, the number of unspecified scholar statuses is statistically significant in this analysis.

5. This is borne out by the overall submission stats for 2015–2018, in which Germany's share is down to 2 percent.



The category Other, which represents 5 percent of all submissions, consists of: emeritus/retired professor (7); visiting professor (7); senior lecturer (6); college student (3); medical doctor (2); scholar-in-residence (1); librarian (1); teaching associate (1); professional/practitioner (1); and research fellow (1).

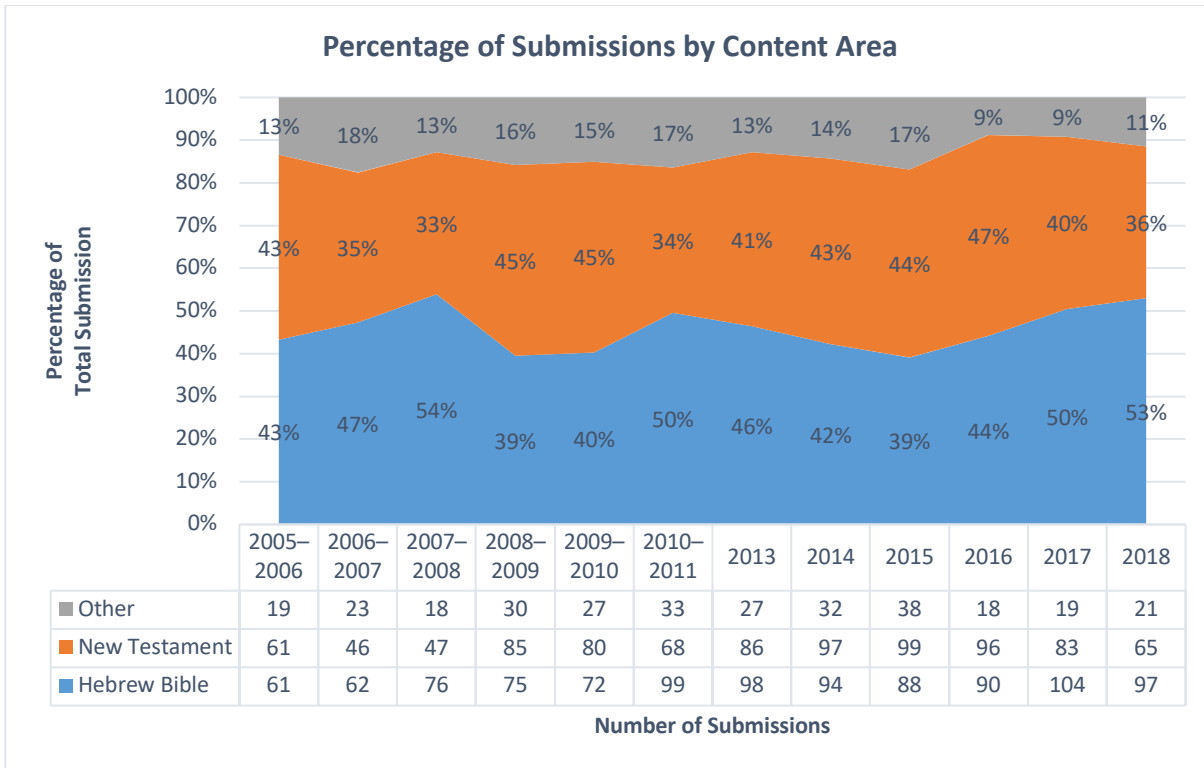
The group with the most submissions is graduate students, who provided 20 percent of *JBL* submissions. However, if we group all long-term academic posts<sup>6</sup> together (i.e., the traditional scholarly base of an academic journal), their submissions amount to 52 percent, while graduate students combined with all other career statuses total 39 percent; unspecified make up the remaining 9 percent.

### 1.3. Submission Content Statistics

*JBL* has long tracked the content area of submissions, primarily in terms of Hebrew Bible, New Testament, or Other.<sup>7</sup> This allows us to trace submission trends by content area since 2005.

6. This category includes: Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Full Professor, Distinguished Professor/Endowed Chair, and Emeritus/Retired Professor, as well as Lecturer and Senior Lecturer, since in most contexts where these submissions come from (e.g., the UK), these titles refer to long-term academic posts.

7. Prior to *Scholastica* (ca. 2015), the categories reported were HB, NT, Extracanonical, and General. Additional tags were also recorded in our tracking database (extrabiblical, early Christian literature, etc.). More recently we have moved simply to HB, NT, and Other, due to the lack of an appropriate umbrella label for the relatively small number of submissions that cover a variety of topics that cannot be limited to HB or NT. To normalize the data over time, the old categories Extracanonical and General have been combined to form the Other category for those years (2005–2014). Furthermore, in a few instances submissions have been tagged with multiple areas (e.g., HB/EB, NT/EB, NT/Other, etc.). In these cases, for statistical purposes, any submission that includes EB or Other in the tag is counted for Other. HB/NT submissions count as NT.



There is significant variation over the years in the exact split between the three content areas. The proportion of Hebrew Bible submissions is notably on the rise the past four years, but a similar pattern is observable for 2005–2008 and 2008–2011. Nonetheless, *JBL* overall tends to be somewhat more popular with Hebrew Bible scholars than New Testament scholars. For the entire period 2005–2018 (excluding the missing year, 2012), the distribution is: Hebrew Bible, 45 percent; New Testament, 41 percent; Other, 14 percent. The decline in the Other category in 2016 and following (during which time it has been fairly constant) may be attributable more to how submissions were categorized than actual submissions trends.

One final aspect worth considering is the percentage of submissions by content area with respect to gender. (Other is not reported here since the numbers are too low to be a reliable indicator.)

**Articles by Area and Gender, 2015–2018**

<b>HB</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Total</b>
Women	26%	30%	28%	25%	<b>27%</b>
Men	74%	70%	72%	75%	<b>73%</b>

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<b>NT</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Total</b>
Women	16%	13%	11%	23%	<b>15%</b>
Men	84%	88%	89%	77%	<b>85%</b>

This table reveals a striking difference in the distribution of submissions by men and women between Hebrew Bible and New Testament. For the whole period 2015–2018, just 15 percent of NT submissions were from women, whereas 27 percent of HB submissions were from women. Viewed another way, women

submit nearly twice as many articles on the Hebrew Bible as on the New Testament. The total breakdown for 2015–2018 manuscript submissions by women is as follows: HB, 103; NT, 52; Other, 17.

#### 1.4. Summary and Conclusions on Submissions Data

Overall, *JBL* clearly continues to attract submissions by a large number of scholars from an increasingly diverse range of countries. We receive a suitable blend of articles on Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and other relevant areas of inquiry that allows us to maintain our identity as flagship journal of biblical studies, while also pursuing new methodologies and avenues of inquiry. One area we should seek to understand better is the imbalance between Hebrew Bible and New Testament in submissions from women.

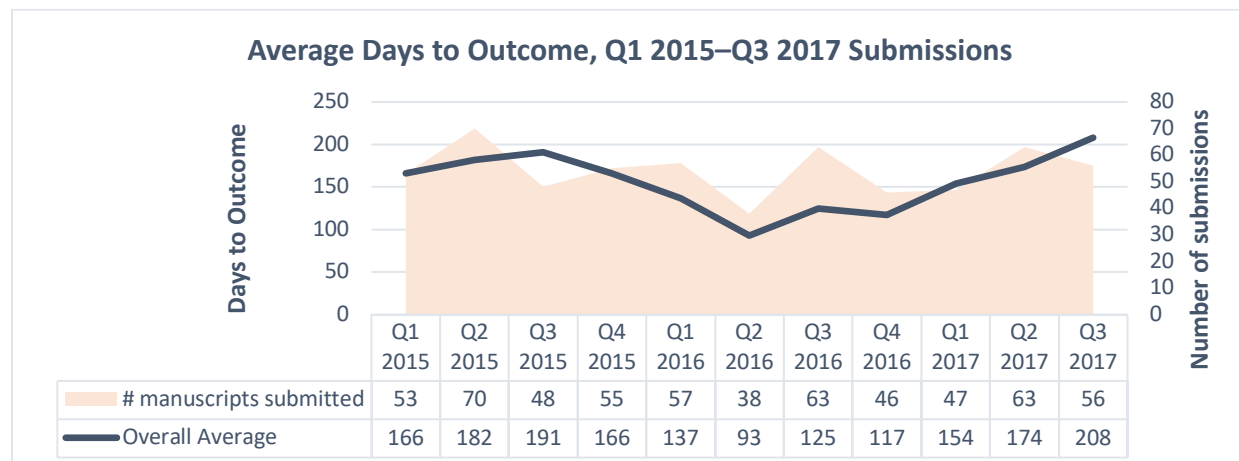
## 2. Review

Once a manuscript is submitted to *JBL*, the following outcomes are possible:

- Accepted (Full): The article is accepted without further required revisions.
- Accepted (Provisional): The article is accepted, pending specific required revisions.
- Revise and Resubmit: The article is declined, with the option to resubmit and undergo a new round of review.
- Rejected with Reviews: The article is declined, following the double-blind peer review, with no option to resubmit.
- Desk rejected: The article is declined, with no option to resubmit, based on the general editor's judgment that the submission is inappropriate for *JBL* due to content or genre.
- Withdrawn: The author withdraws the manuscript (permanently) before a decision is issued by the general editor.

### 2.1. Time to Decision

The following chart and table depict the average time to reach the outcomes listed above, from the date of submission. These statistics are available only from the point when we began tracking these data: 2015 to present. The years and quarters refer to manuscripts *submitted* in that particular year and quarter. Thus “Q2 2016” refers to all manuscripts that were submitted in the second quarter of 2016. To avoid misleading data, statistics are given only for years and quarters for which all submissions have reached a final outcome; the range used will be Q1 2015 through Q3 2017.





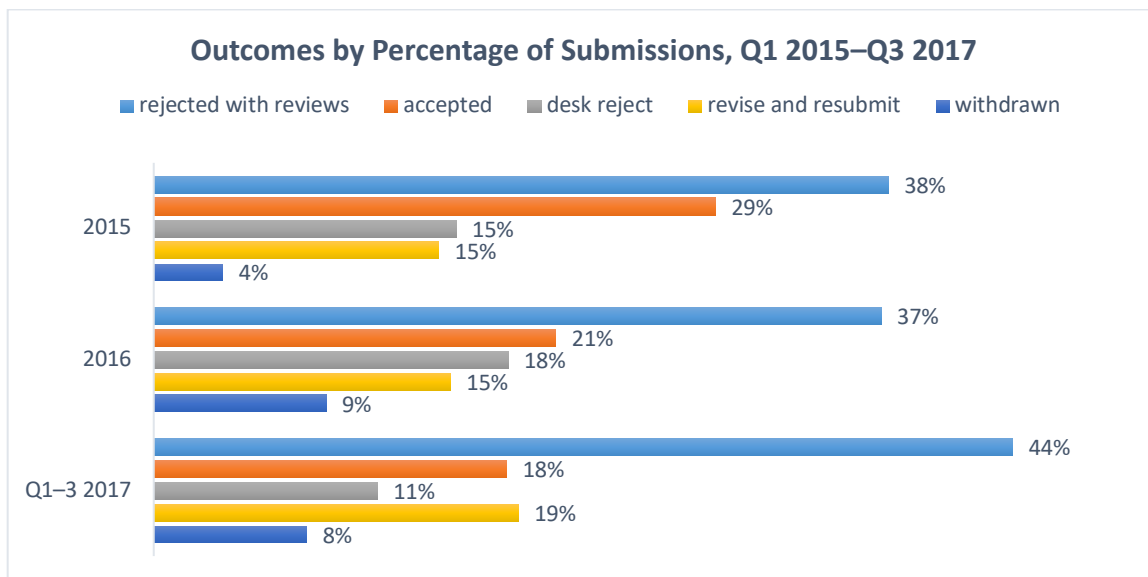
Average Days to Specific Outcomes, Q1 2015–Q3 2017 Submissions

	Q1 2015	Q2 2015	Q3 2015	Q4 2015	Q1 2016	Q2 2016	Q3 2016	Q4 2016	Q1 2017	Q2 2017	Q3 2017
Manuscripts Submitted	53	70	48	55	57	38	63	46	47	63	56
Decision with Review	180	194	199	195	168	110	151	145	168	203	232
Desk Reject	106	87	132	49	10	3	3	4	2	2	4
Accept	176	212	218	235	154	102	145	135	148	168	245
Revise and Resubmit	224	215	176	207	214	131	198	159	184	256	250
Reject with Reviews	169	172	213	201	185	141	141	171	176	232	250
Withdrawn	—	—	93	62	20	2	98	64	17	98	12

This chart makes two things clear. First, the time to reach all decisions after review has been increasing since Q4 2016. Although it initially appeared that review times would be lower on average once the transition from SpringCM to Scholastica was complete, this has not yet been the case. This first observation is mitigated by the second: the number of submissions per quarter, represented by the shaded area (this is the same data as listed above in 1.1. Total Submissions). There seems to be a general correlation between the number of manuscripts submitted in a given quarter and the average time to reach a decision after review. This is unsurprising, given the limited capacity of the editorial board to review manuscripts, but it suggests that, if submissions continue to increase, so will decision times, unless either the number of reviewers is increased (either by board expansion or the use of guest reviewers) or existing board members complete more reviews (which is unrealistic).

## 2.2. Outcome Statistics

Once again, the data is limited to years and quarters that have been completed (Q1 2015–Q3 2017), since statistics from incomplete quarters (Q4 2017–Q3 2018) are unreliable.



The most notable trend here is the sharp decrease in the acceptance rate, from 29 percent in 2015 to 18 percent in 2017. This is a healthy development, as 2015's high acceptance rate resulted in a significant production backlog. This represents a return to *JBL*'s longer term average acceptance rate (reported at 21%

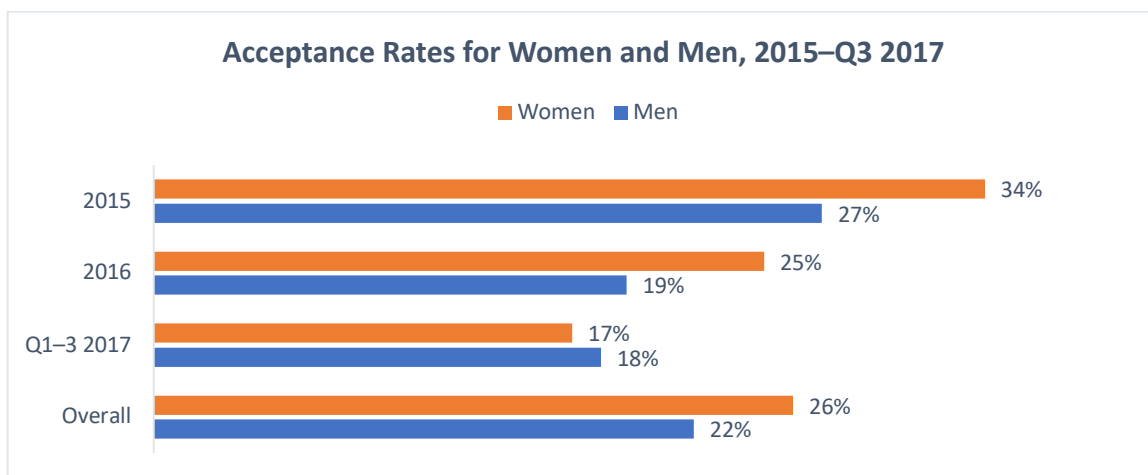
for 2002–2012). The overall acceptance rate for 2015–2017 was 23%. Given the current submission rate (200–220 submissions per year), a 20 percent acceptance rate yields 40–44 manuscripts accepted per year, which is a reasonable number of articles to publish in a given year.<sup>8</sup> As the acceptance rate has gone down, the rate of revise and resubmit and rejection with reviews has correspondingly risen.

On the topic of revise and resubmit, based on records for 2015–2017 (which may be incomplete for 2015), 40 submissions were recorded as resubmissions. Of these, 21 were accepted (53 percent), while 17 were rejected with reviews (43 percent); one received a second revise and resubmit decision, while another one was withdrawn. Considering the fact that resubmissions go through a fresh round of review, typically with a new set of reviewers, this much higher acceptance rate (compared with new submissions) suggests that the revise and resubmit process is working well, both in yielding improved versions of articles suitable for acceptance and as a safeguard against the inherent subjectivity of the review process, which may sometimes rule out submissions that might ultimately be worthy of publication.

### 2.2.1. Acceptance Rates by Demographic

To gain another view of acceptance patterns, we can return to the demographic categories analyzed above in terms of submissions and examine the acceptance rates for each group. Acceptance rate is calculated as the percentage accepted out of the total submissions by a given demographic.

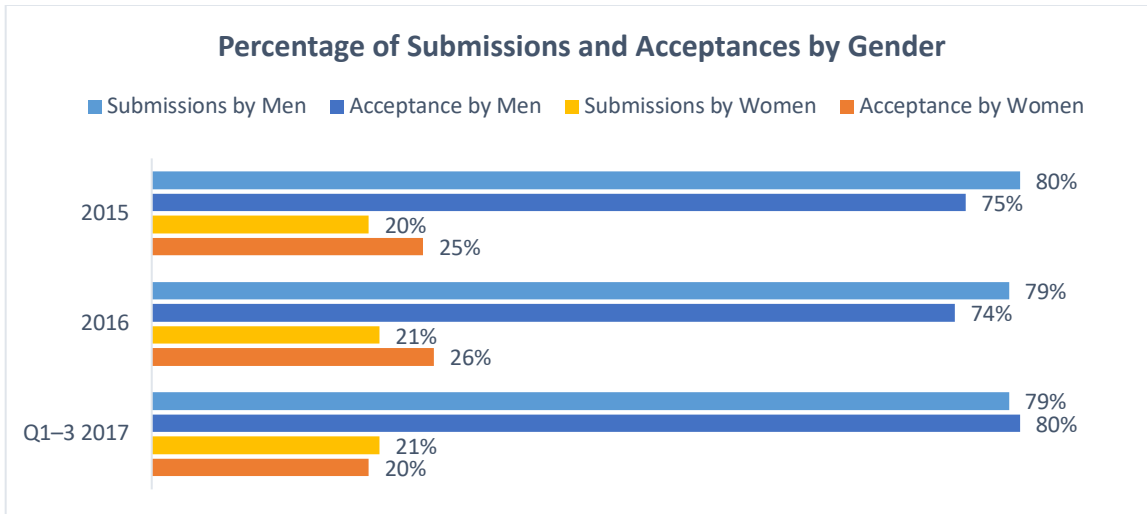
#### 2.2.1.1. Acceptance Rates by Gender



Several features are notable here. For the period 2015–2017, women overall have a higher acceptance rate (26 percent) than men (22 percent). But since 2015 the acceptance rate for both women and men has steadily gone down. For the most recent period, Q1–Q3 2017, men have a slightly higher acceptance rate (18 percent) than women (17 percent). Caution is necessary in interpreting these data, due to the lower overall number of submissions by women, which yields a much smaller sample size. Given this qualification, the most recent acceptance rates are as expected with blind peer review: nearly equal.

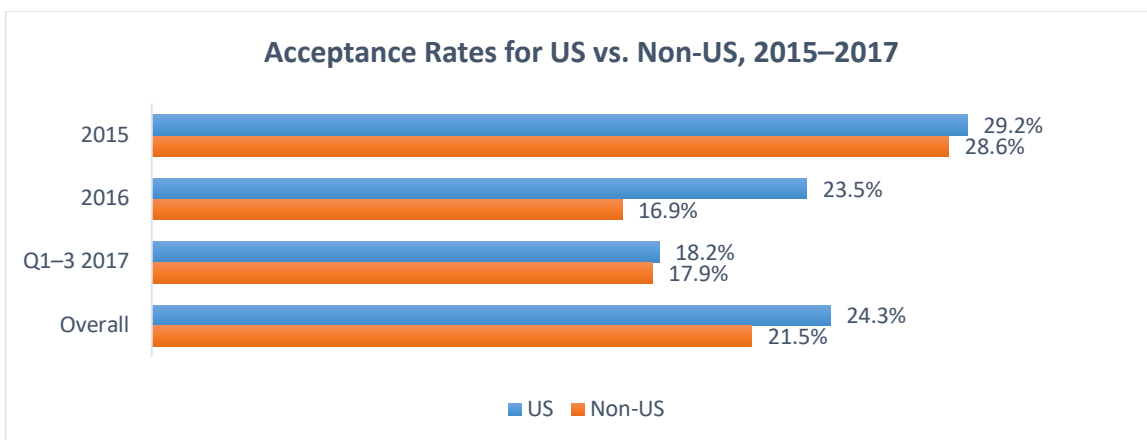
We can also analyze these data by looking at the percentage of total acceptances contributed by each group. We can then compare this with the submission data.

8. As discussed in the next section, *JBL* currently averages more than 10 articles per issue; this is a recent development that was due partially to the need to reduce the backlog.



This chart reiterates the fact that more recently (Q1–Q3 2017) the percent of acceptances by men and women, respectively, is close to the percent of overall submissions by men and women. At present, then, it appears that women and men are just as likely to have a manuscript accepted for publication in *JBL*.

2.2.1.2. Acceptances by Location



Overall, acceptance rates are similar for authors based in the US and outside the US (2016 is an outlier). Viewing acceptance rates by country is more helpful. Due to the small sample size for most countries, only the overall data for the period 2015–Q3 2017 is displayed.

Acceptance Rates by Country, 2015–2017

Germany	36%	United States	24%
United Kingdom	35%	Elsewhere	14%
Canada	26%	Australia	11%
Israel	24%	Overall	23%

The Elsewhere category includes the following countries, all of which had at least one submission during 2015–2017; the first number is the number of accepted articles, the second total submissions: Argentina, 0/1; Austria, 0/1; Azerbaijan, 0/1; Barbados, 0/1; Belgium, 2/5; Chile, 0/1; China, 0/3; Estonia, 0/1; Ethiopia,

1/1; Finland, 2/5; France, 0/2; Hong Kong, 0/2; India, 0/3; Indonesia, 0/1; Ireland, 1/4; Malta and USA, 1/1; Myanmar, 0/1; Netherlands, 1/8; New Zealand, 0/3; Nigeria, 0/8; Norway, 2/4; Pakistan, 0/1; South Africa, 0/10; South Korea, 0/6; Spain, 0/1; Sweden, 2/6; Switzerland, 1/4; Taiwan, 0/1; Unknown, 1/15.

Most of the top countries by number of submissions also had slightly better than average acceptance rates (though only marginally so for USA and Israel). The main outliers are Germany, which submitted a small number of articles but had the highest percentage accepted among the countries listed separately, and Australia, at the opposite end of the spectrum. Considering its significant number of submissions, the UK's 35 percent acceptance rate is also notable.

The best picture of global acceptance rates is provided when we use regional groupings.

#### **Acceptance Rates by Region, 2015–2017**

Europe	32%
North America	24%
Western Asia	24%
Asia Pacific	6%
Africa	5%
Latin America and Caribbean	0%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>23%</b>

Comparing the last two tables with the submission statistics above, it becomes clear that, while submissions from around the globe are on the rise, the authors whose articles are most often accepted are located in the traditional centers of biblical criticism: Europe, North America, and Israel (Western Asia). Europe in particular is disproportionately successful, as it accounts for just 18 percent of submissions but yields 25 percent of acceptances.<sup>9</sup> The other regions contribute to total acceptances as follows: North America, 64 percent; Western Asia, 8 percent; Asia Pacific, 2 percent; Africa, 1 percent; Latin America and Caribbean, 0 percent.

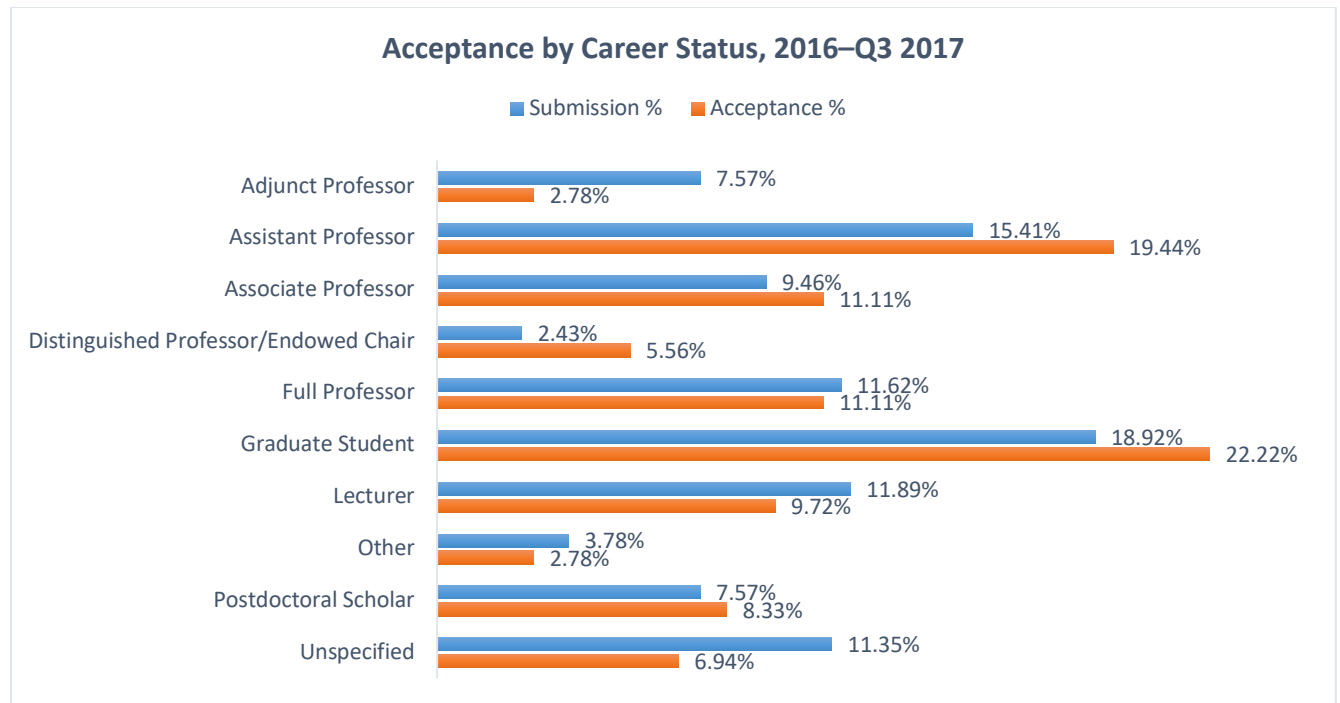
#### 2.2.1.3. Acceptances by Career Status

In addition to considering acceptance rates by gender and location, we may profitably examine acceptance rates in terms of the various career statuses. The following chart shows the percentage of all accepted manuscripts submitted by scholars at each career status. For comparison, it also shows the percentage of all manuscripts submitted by that same group. We can thus see which categories of authors have more or less articles accepted in relation to the number of submissions.

As before, it is important to note that these are all self-reported. In addition, the Other category includes: emeritus professor, independent scholar, medical doctor, professional/practitioner, senior lecturer, and visiting professor.

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9. In addition to the major contributors—the UK and Germany—the majority of the acceptances in the “elsewhere” category above is from European-based authors.



A few categories tend to have a much lower percentage of articles accepted than submitted: Adjunct Professor and Unspecified.<sup>10</sup> Others, most notably Assistant Professor, Distinguished Professor, and Graduate Student, represent a larger percentage of acceptances than of submissions. Authors in long-term academic posts combined (see note 6 above) submitted 57 percent of accepted articles, compared with 51 percent of the submissions overall; in other words, their acceptance rate was higher than the average.

### 2.2.2. Acceptance Rates by Content Area

The data for acceptances by content area is mostly predictable.

	2015	2016	2017	Overall
HB Submissions	39%	44%	49%	43%
HB Acceptances	48%	43%	50%	47%
NT Submissions	44%	47%	43%	45%
NT Acceptances	42%	48%	43%	44%
Other Submissions	17%	9%	8%	12%
Other Acceptances	11%	10%	7%	9%

In 2016 and 2017, the percentage of articles accepted closely matches the percentage of submissions. However, in 2015 HB articles were accepted at a higher rate and thus made up a larger portion of the accepted articles compared with their corresponding portion of articles submitted.<sup>11</sup>

10. A related observation is that, even though the Unspecified group submitted only 11 percent of all manuscripts in this period, their submissions accounted for 30 percent of the desk rejections.

11. Note that this table includes only 2015–2017 data, whereas the earlier chart showing percentage of submissions was based on all data up to the present, since *submission* data is always complete. As noted there, HB articles currently make up a larger share of the submissions than NT, in contrast to the period in the table here.

### 2.3. Section Summary and Conclusions

As submission numbers have stayed strong, review times have continued to pose a challenge. At a qualitative level, some of the recent lag may also be attributable to the kinds of manuscripts received. Over the past twelve to eighteen months, we have seen an increasing number of submissions that include initial publications of ancient manuscripts. Because such submissions often demand specialized knowledge, securing competent reviewer can take much longer than the typical article. Although not great in number, the manuscripts in the Other category also frequently pose reviewer assignment challenges. Board expansion or more frequent use of guest reviewers may be the most effective ways to address these issues. It will also be beneficial if *JBL* is able to recruit one or more specialists in papyrology to reduce the review time on ancient manuscript publications.

The data on acceptance rates and percentages look positive overall. Although further comparative study is needed, *JBL*'s overall acceptance rate of 23 percent for 2015–2017 demonstrates that *JBL* is highly selective, publishing only the best quality articles.<sup>12</sup> The fact that *JBL* is able to receive fully half of its submissions from holders of long-term academic posts is perhaps an indicator of the generally high quality of manuscripts received. At the same time, *JBL* is serving as an effective publication opportunity for graduate students and authors around the world. Regions outside the traditional bastions of biblical criticism remain relatively untapped. To broaden our global impact, we will need to continue to consider how to attract high-quality submissions from scholars working in these areas.

## 3. Publication and Production

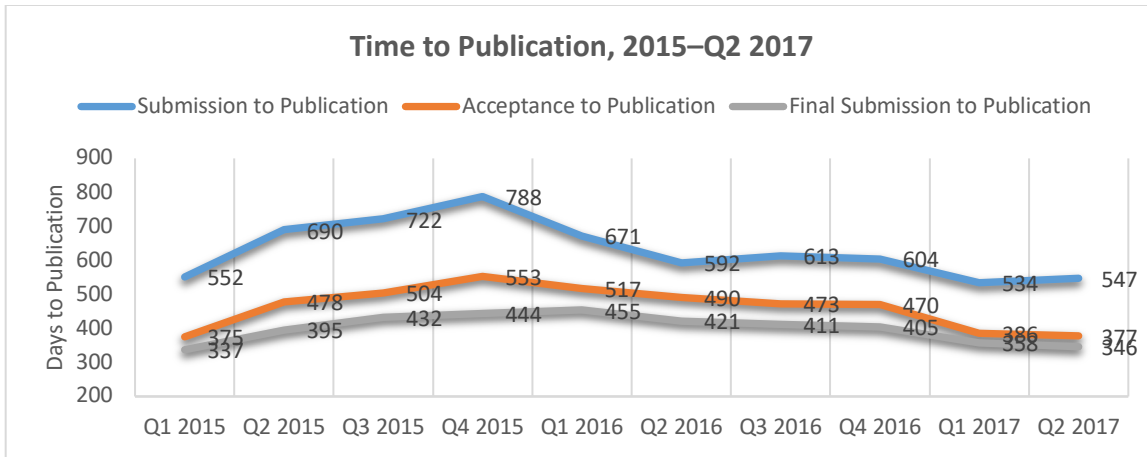
Once an article is accepted for publication in *JBL*, the author is given the opportunity to make final additions or adjustments in the final draft. Upon submission of the final draft, the article then enters the publication queue and is eligible for assignment to an issue of *JBL*. Articles are generally published in the order in which the final drafts are submitted. Sometimes there are slight changes to the order to ensure that every issue of *JBL* has a suitable balance across the content areas and appropriate gender representation. The data and analysis in this section pertain to all that happens from acceptance until publication.

### 3.1. Publication Timelines

Since few manuscripts submitted in Q3 2017 or later have been published or assigned (and none from 2018), statistics relating to time to publication are limited to manuscripts submitted in 2015–Q2 2017.

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12. In a 2012 study comparing acceptance rates in *JBL* and the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* for prior 6 years, *CBQ*'s acceptance rate was 33%, compared with 24% for *JBL* during the same time period (2006–2011).



This chart depicts the time to publication from three different stages: initial submission, acceptance, and submission of the final draft. *JBL* has been steadily improving in all three areas. The times to publication from submission and acceptance are not the best indicators of *JBL*'s performance, since both include the time it takes for an author to submit a final draft; although some authors submit the final draft immediately upon final acceptance, others take weeks or even months. Submission to publication also includes time when the author is revising a provisionally accepted article. Final submission to publication is thus the best indicator of the efficiency of the publication phase of *JBL*. Beginning with the manuscripts submitted in Q1 2017 (all of which have been published or assigned), the time for a manuscript to be published after the author submits a final draft is less than a year. This is a marked improvement over the time it took to publish the manuscripts submitted in Q2 2015 through Q4 2016. Two factors contributed to this improvement: decreased acceptance rate (18 percent in 2017 compared with 29 percent in 2015) and increased issue size (see below). If *JBL* management remains proactive in monitoring these factors, we should see continued improvement. The current *overall* times (i.e., average for all published or assigned manuscripts in the 2015–2018 dataset) for all three metrics are as follows: Submission to Publication, 633 days; Acceptance to Publication, 457; Final Submission to Publication, 394.

The other important metric for gauging *JBL*'s efficiency and performance in this phase is the publication queue. At the time of writing this report, 14 articles await assignment to an issue, with 13 articles assigned to the upcoming December issue. Thus we presently have one issue's worth of articles awaiting assignment. This is a healthy number; we would not want fewer. There are also six additional articles that have been accepted (one only provisional) for which we do not yet have a final draft from the author. So altogether there are 20 articles that have been accepted but not published or assigned. By contrast, the spring 2017 Council Report noted that there had been an average of 48 articles in the publication queue. That backlog has now been addressed, and *JBL* should look to maintain the current size of the publication queue.

### 3.2. Statistics on Articles Published

Published	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
# Published	42	44	51	47	43	43	49	55	50	51	59	54	588
<b>By Gender</b>													
# By Women	7	5	10	8	6	5	9	11	14	12	14	13	114
# By Men	36	39	41	39	37	40	40	49	40	41	47	42	491
# Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
% By Women	17%	11%	20%	17%	14%	12%	18%	20%	28%	24%	24%	24%	19%

By Geography													
US	30	26	37	34	29	28	39	24	36	30	38	31	382
Non-US	12	18	14	13	14	15	10	18	14	20	22	26	196
% Non-US	29%	41%	27%	28%	33%	35%	20%	43%	28%	40%	37%	46%	33%
By Subject													
HB	26	20	29	18	19	24	35	31	27	22	26	24	51%
NT	8	19	12	19	15	15	12	14	13	23	21	26	34%
Other	8	5	10	10	9	4	2	10	10	7	12	4	15%

Note: Statistics for author by gender and geography include coauthors, so the total number of authors is higher than the number of articles. In addition, 2018 statistics are based on the three issues published thus far and the year's last issue, which has been finalized and has entered production.

Significant trends in each element are evident in this twelve-year span of *JBL*.

- **Articles Published:** *JBL* has steadily increased the number of total articles published. Although there is some variation, there have been 50 or more articles per volume every year since 2014. The total of 54 in 2018 is especially significant, since it did not include a *JBL* Forum (the articles of which are much shorter than usual); the only years with a higher number of articles (2014 and 2017) both had a Forum section.
- **Gender:** There is a clear trend toward more articles authored by women. From 2014 on, women have written at least 20 percent of *JBL* articles.
- **Geography:** This statistic varies, but the overall trend is gradually upward. The 2018 volume has the highest percent of non-US authors.
- **Subject:** Despite a few years in which New Testament articles accounted for the largest share by a slim margin (2010, 2016, 2018), there are consistently more Hebrew Bible articles than New Testament. Fully half of all *JBL* articles over the past twelve years have focused on the Hebrew Bible, with the other half split between New Testament and Other.

#### 4. Reception and Impact

The spring 2018 Council Report reported that subscription numbers continued to decline throughout 2017, although not as sharply as in 2016. The same trend has continued since then. The current issue of *JBL* that just mailed (*JBL* 137.3) had 1,867 total subscribers (print, online, and combination), down from the 1,946 reported for *JBL* 136.4.

Subscriptions are, however, only one way of measuring *JBL*'s reception (financial considerations are addressed separately below). Two further ways of gauging *JBL*'s impact are online usage stats and citation metrics. We briefly survey each of these here; future analyses of *JBL* will examine these factors in greater detail.

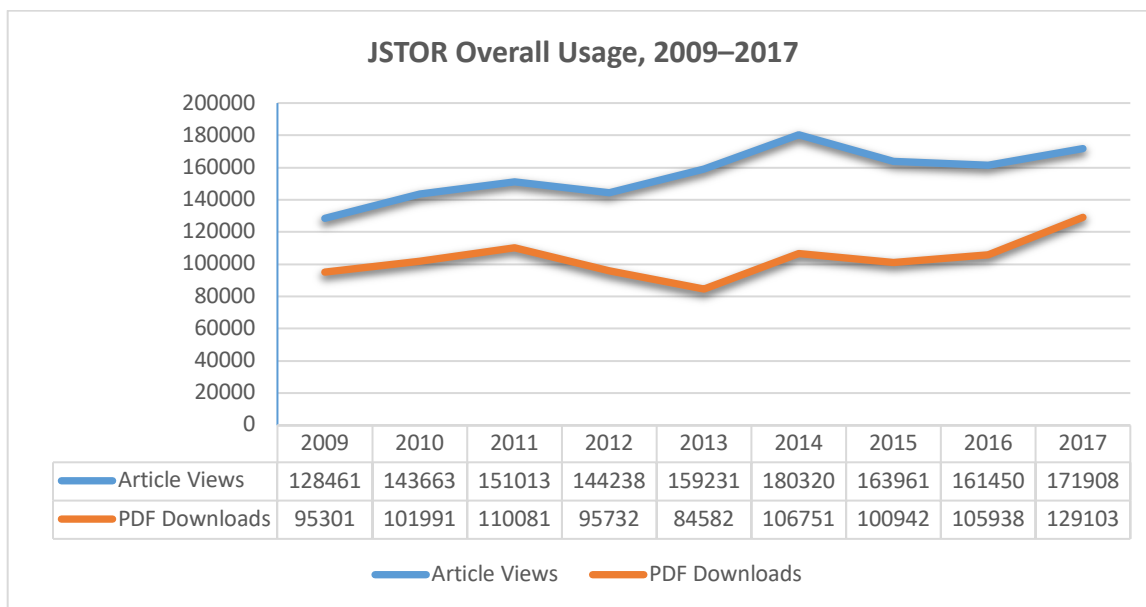
##### 4.1. JSTOR Usage Data

*JBL* is available to read online through a variety of providers, including JSTOR, Project MUSE, EBSCO, and ProQuest (see appendix 1 for a complete list). These content aggregators both license *JBL* content to make available to their own individual and institutional subscribers and sell digital downloads of individual articles. JSTOR also serves as our official digital host for providing access to the online edition of the journal for SBL members. Since we know that the majority of our readers, whether students, scholars, or interested



individuals, access *JBL* digitally, it makes sense to examine usage patterns on our primary digital platform, JSTOR.<sup>13</sup>

The chart on the following page represents total *JBL* usage, as far back as JSTOR has data for complete years.<sup>14</sup>



Interpreting this data can be a challenge, but what is clear is that overall article views and downloads have been rising gradually since 2009. Of the two categories, PDF downloads are probably more significant, since they suggest that the site visitor wishes to read the article after arriving on the article page. The raw numbers are also impressive. For the entire range available, August 2008 through September 2018, *JBL* articles have been viewed 1,628,210 times and downloaded 1,047,271 times. Subscriptions may be down, but usage of *JBL* is strong.

JSTOR also makes it possible to see where *JBL* is being read. It is interesting to compare this data for a twelve-month period for 2010–2011 (left column) versus 2017–2018 (right column).

**JSTOR Regional Usage**

Region	Views and Downloads	Percent	Region	Views and Downloads	Percent
North America	175,175	66.2%	North America	168,887	58.2%
Europe	50,174	19.0%	Europe	55,086	19.0%
Asia	15,208	5.7%	Asia	28,928	10.0%
Oceania	12,881	4.9%	Africa	18,382	6.3%
Africa	7,883	3.0%	Oceania	15,404	5.3%
South America	3,234	1.2%	South America	3,256	1.1%
Unknown	80	0.0%	Unknown	263	0.1%

13. Data in this subsection derive from usage reports provided by JSTOR at <https://about.jstor.org/publishers/>.

14. In this case, the usage data does not include the predecessor to *JBL*, the *Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis* (1881–1888).

For these two years at least, usage actually declined in North America, but it significantly increased in Asia, Oceania, and Africa. This corresponds in some ways with the submission statistics: there is growing interest in *JBL* worldwide.<sup>15</sup>

We can also see which articles are most popular on JSTOR. The following table shows the top twenty articles accessed from 1 September 2017 to 1 September 2018.

Rank	Access	Article Title	Author	Year
1	7,792	The Origin of the Names of Angels and Demons in the Extra-Canonical Apocalyptic Literature to 100 A.D.	George A. Barton	1912
2	6,789	The Meaning of the "Royal Law", Matt. 5:21-48	George A. Barton	1918
3	1,767	Evil Spirits in the Bible	C. H. Toy	1890
4	1,567	The Sanctuary at Shiloh, and Samuel's Sleeping Therein	L. W. Batten	1900
5	1,544	A Reflection on the Black Lives Matter Movement and Its Impact on My Scholarship	Wil Gafney	2017
6	1,298	Christianity and Hellenism	E. von Dobschütz	1914
7	1,143	The Dedication Feast in the Old Testament	James A. Montgomery	1910
8	1,142	The Dating of the Synoptic Gospels	Warren J. Moulton	1918
9	1,113	"Righteousness" and "The Righteousness of God" in the Old Testament and in St. Paul	James Hardy Ropes	1903
10	883	An Ephesian Imprisonment of Paul	Benjamin W. Robinson	1910
11	866	Tirosh and Yayin	Hinckley G. Mitchell	1891
12	825	When Did Angels Become Demons?	Dale B. Martin	2010
13	821	The Religion of Canaan: From the Earliest Times to the Hebrew Conquest	W. Carleton Wood	1916
14	782	The Composition of the Book of Daniel	George A. Barton	1898
15	762	The Purpose of Mark's Gospel	Benjamin W. Bacon	1910
16	733	On the Trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin	George A. Barton	1922
17	723	The Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles	E. Y. Hincks	1897
18	713	The Vulgate Chapters and Numbered Verses in the Hebrew Bible	G. F. Moore	1893
19	707	The Tower of Babel and the Origin of the World's Cultures	Theodore Hiebert	2007
20	688	Blaming Eve Alone: Translation, Omission, and Implications of עמה in Genesis 3:6b	Julie Faith Parker	2013

Obviously, most of these articles are older, with sixteen of the twenty from 1922 or earlier. The most likely explanation is that JSTOR makes these older articles freely available to anyone.<sup>16</sup> With regard to this group of older articles, it is noticeable that several deal with angelic or demonic beings (this is also the case with one of the newer articles, by Dale Martin). This suggests, perhaps, a curious, nonscholarly readership for these older articles. It will be worthwhile to try to determine how readers are finding these articles; it may be that the free articles are linked at Wikipedia or other free web resources.

15. One should note that South America's usage is extremely low, similar to its nearly nonexistent submissions.

16. JSTOR makes many older journal articles that are now in the public domain freely accessible through its Early Journal Content program; in fact, 1922 is the cutoff point for free articles through this program. See further at <https://support.jstor.org/hc/en-us/articles/115004681927-Early-Journal-Open-Access-Content-Free-Content-on-JSTOR>.

It is notable that the top recent article is Wil Gafney's contribution to the 2017 *JBL* Forum "Black Lives Matter for Critical Biblical Scholarship." This fact is striking since this essay is a departure from the historical-critical pieces many readers associate with *JBL*. Also noteworthy is Julie Faith Parker's article on Eve. A list of the top one hundred articles (available upon request) reveals the same trends: aside from a host of pre-1923 articles, many of the most popular articles concern gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and other topics of contemporary urgency, along with topics of apparently perennial interest such as angels, demons, and origins.

On the whole, the JSTOR usage data offer fascinating insights into how and where people are using *JBL*. At this stage the data raise more questions than they answer. However, considering the overall trajectory of the market toward digital media consumption, *JBL* would do well to continue to engage with this trove of usage data.

#### 4.2. Citation Metrics

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Scopus CiteScore	0.25	0.34	0.38	0.30	0.36
Religious Studies Rank	65	30	39	59	52
Scimago SJR metric	0.331	0.371	0.500	0.344	0.228
Scimago h index	19	19	15	17	19

As the above table shows, citation metrics for *JBL* were mixed in the 2017 statistics year (the most recent year available). In the Scopus CiteScore, *JBL*'s score of 0.36 was a significant improvement over 0.30 in 2016.<sup>17</sup> For the data currently available, *JBL*'s CiteScore was higher only in 2015, when it was 0.38. In 2016 *JBL* had dropped to 59th in the Religious Studies category; it improved slightly in 2017, to 52nd out of 433 journals. *JBL* is also ranked 42nd out of 1,124 journals in the Literature and Literary Theory category (the only other category in which it is ranked). One biblical studies journal is ranked higher than *JBL* in the Religious Studies category: *New Testament Studies* (number 36; score: 0.46) (the same was true last year). There are also a few cognate journals ranked above *JBL* in the Religious Studies category: *Dead Sea Discoveries* (36; 0.46), *Journal of Early Christian Studies* (39; 0.45), *Theological Studies* (42; 0.41), and *HTS Theologise Studies/Theological Studies* (49; 0.37).

*JBL* was down in the SJR metric in 2017 at 0.228. Its h index, however, was higher, to 19 (from 17 in 2016 and 15 in 2015).<sup>18</sup> Taking all the metrics together, *JBL* remains in the top 20 percent of Religious Studies journals and among the top five among peer journals.<sup>19</sup> It should further be noted that citation metrics are susceptible to manipulation (e.g., by means of self-citation) and volatility in a number of ways and must be interpreted with care.

17. CiteScore calculates their ranking by dividing the number of citations of the sampled documents from the year of the rankings by the total number of documents published by the journal in the preceding three years. Accordingly, the 2017 statistics measure citations in 2017 of articles published only in 2014–2016. CiteScore data is available at <https://www.scopus.com/sources>.

18. SJR data and h index are available at <http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php>. The SJR metric seeks to account not only for the raw number of citations but factors in the prestige of those citations. The h index measures "the journal's number of articles (h) that have received at least h citations over the whole period."

19. Indeed, *JBL* has been in the top quartile for SJR statistics in both the Religious Studies and Literature and Literary Theory categories as far back as they have statistics (since 2003).

### **Conclusion to Sections 1–4**

Overall, the *Journal of Biblical Literature* is healthy and thriving. There is every indication that *JBL* remains the flagship journal of the field and will for many years to come. Submission numbers are strong, allowing *JBL* to be selective and yet continue to publish a high volume of quality scholarship. An increasingly diverse group of scholars from around the world is reading the journal and submitting articles. At a time when other high-profile biblical studies publications have been criticized for their lack of representation, articles by women are consistently submitted, accepted, and published. Finally, *JBL* continues to be well-received by our core audience and well-regarded by the leading ranking agencies.

This is not to say that *JBL* is without challenges. While high submissions are, overall, a positive factor, they drive two of the main problems facing *JBL*: review time and production backlog. The latter problem has been mostly addressed by a combination of increased issue size and a return to an acceptance rate closer to our historical average. The present General Editor, Adele Reinhartz, has already taken significant steps to resolve the problem of review time by soliciting guest reviewers to speed up the pace of review and by advocating for an increase in the size of the *JBL* editorial board. These measures should gradually begin to bring review times down. *JBL* should also look into ways to be more inviting to scholars outside Europe and North America.

This analysis has also identified areas for further research. Now that we have a clearer picture of *JBL*'s performance over the past several years, the next step is to examine additional comparative data from other journals with regard to review and publication timelines as well as acceptance rates.

Appendix 1: Vendors Licensing the Full Text of *JBL*

**ATLA**

ATLA Serials

**Cengage Learning**

Cengage: Jisc Collections: Academic OneFile

**Dow Jones Factiva**

Factiva Couperin; Factiva

**EBSCOhost**

Academic Search Alumni Edition  
Academic Search Complete  
Academic Search Elite  
Academic Search Premier  
Academic Search Ultimate  
Advanced Placement Source  
ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials  
ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials Plus  
ATLASerials, Religion Collection  
ATLASerialsPLUS for Alum  
EBSCOhost EJS  
Humanities Full Text (H.W. Wilson)  
Humanities International Complete  
Humanities Source  
Humanities Source Ultimate  
Jewish Studies Source  
Literary Reference Center  
Literary Reference Center Plus  
MegaFILE  
OmniFile Full Text Mega (H.W. Wilson)  
OmniFile Full Text Select (H.W. Wilson)  
Religion and Philosophy Collection

**Gale**

Academic OneFile  
Expanded Academic ASAP  
General OneFile  
InfoTrac Custom  
Religion and Philosophy Collection

**HEAL Link**

Hellenic Academic Libraries Link

**INIST-CNRS**

Institut de l'Information Scientifique et Technique du CNRS  
BiblioSHS – Institut des Sciences Humaines et Sociales du CNRS

**JSTOR**

JSTOR Archive Collection AZ Listing  
JSTOR Arts and Sciences III  
JSTOR Early Journal Content  
JSTOR Journal Hosting Program  
JSTOR Museum Collection  
JSTOR Public Library Collection I  
JSTOR Religion and Theology Collection

JSTOR: Jisc Collections: Arts and Sciences III Collection  
JSTOR: Jisc Collections: Religion and Theology Collection

**OhioLINK**

OhioLINK Electronic Journal Center

**Ovid**

ATLA Religion Database + ATLAS

**Project MUSE**

Project MUSE Jisc: Standard Collection  
Project MUSE Philosophy and Religion Collection  
Project MUSE Premium Collection  
Project MUSE Religious Studies  
Project MUSE Single Title Subscriptions  
Project MUSE Standard and Premium (SURFmarket)  
Project MUSE Standard Collection  
Project MUSE Premium Collection  
Project MUSE: Jisc Collections: Philosophy and Religion  
Project MUSE: Jisc Collections: Premium Collection  
Project MUSE: Jisc Collections: Standard Collection

**ProQuest**

eLibrary  
Literature Online (LION)  
Literature Online (LION) Couperin  
ProQuest Central  
ProQuest Central UK Customers  
ProQuest Central (Alumni Edition)  
ProQuest Central (Corporate)  
ProQuest Central China  
ProQuest Central Essentials  
ProQuest Central Korea  
ProQuest Central Student  
ProQuest Research Library  
ProQuest Research Library (Corporate)  
Proquest: Literature Online: Jisc Collections  
Religion Database  
Religion Database (Alumni Edition)  
Research Library (Alumni Edition)  
Research Library China  
Research Library Prep  
SIRS Editorial

**Thomson Reuters Westlaw**

Lawschool Full-Text Titles

**Universitätsbibliothek Regensburg**

Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek - Freizugängliche E-Journals (1890–1922)