

WHAT JOURNAL? PUBLICATIONS AND CITATIONS ON ENVIRONMENTAL ERGONOMICS

Wouter A. Lotens

Institute for Perception TNO, The Netherlands

Address for reprints:

P.O. Box 23

3769 ZG SOESTERBERG, The Netherlands

Environmental ergonomics is a multidisciplinary field of work, that extends over such different area's as physics, occupational health, physiology, hardware design, experimental psychology, performance and material technology. It derives its added value from the integration of knowledge. This is not reflected in the journals, that are usually dedicated to one of the forementioned area's.

Papers in which the environmental ergonomist is likely to be interested are distributed over tens of journals, even if journals with few papers annually are neglected. Moreover, a citation analysis shows that there is a strong compartmentalization among the journals, proof of the difficulty that scientists have to adapt to other disciplines. Some area's like design and performance, hardly have publication channels, others, such as physiology, are unnecessarily scattered.

The impact of a paper depends on the readership of the journal and on the quality of the paper, usually expressed in the number of citations that it receives. Impact scores for journals as a whole are regularly published and it is tempting to try to get a paper published in a high impact journal. Unfortunately impact scores for entire journals are meaningless for sub-area-s of that journal. Consequently a good paper in a high impact journal may miss any impact because it is read by many but not the right people. The best way to improve the impact of papers on environmental ergonomics is to concentrate them in fewer journals, that cover a wider area.

Most researchers have preference for certain journals, because of affiliation with a scientific society, geography (U.S.A. vs Europe), the applied or pure scientific nature, personal contacts, and alike. A major reason, however, is that the paper just fits into the scope of a particular journal. The fact that the readership is not exactly the desired one is then taken for granted. All these reasons, however justified, are counterproductive to the proliferation of knowledge in our field.

The message is that if environmental ergonomics wants to improve its identity, an arrangement must be made with selected journals for papers to be published in them, under the condition that the journals widen their scope. A proposal will be presented.