

Editorial

Who are *JAAVSO*'s Authors?

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Among the AAVSO's goals are to foster communication and collaboration between amateur and professional astronomers and to further astronomy education. *JAAVSO* aims to support both roles by bringing amateurs' research results to the attention of professionals and by publishing the results of of students' research and of amateur-professional collaborations. One measure of the strength of that support is the composition of the ensemble of our authors, who are an interesting mix of astronomy enthusiasts. They include students, teachers, professors in higher education, and amateur astronomers, who may themselves be employed or retired professionals in other science fields.

Figure 1 gives the number of first authors (or corresponding authors, if they are different) in each of the most recent five volumes, across all our published articles on research, data, instruments/techniques, and education/outreach.

In making these counts, I inferred authors' status from the affiliation given with their articles. If the affiliation is a private observatory or a home address, I assumed the author to be an amateur astronomer unless I had information to the contrary. I considered a retired professional astronomer to be still a professional.

In the case of a university affiliation, I used the university website to identify faculty members. Most universities with

graduate programs also list graduate students. If an author is affiliated with a university but not identified on the institutional website, I assumed that person to be an undergraduate. In a few cases, I know authors' status from their presentations at AAVSO meetings. Affiliation with a high school identifies the authors to be high school students or (in a couple of known cases) teachers. I classified the teachers as professionals. A few ambiguous cases may cause these counts to be randomly in error by one or two.

Our non-student authors are a roughly equal mix of amateurs and professionals. Inspection of Figure 1 shows the mix wandering back and forth, but the five-year averages are almost equal: 14.4 amateurs and 13.4 professionals per volume. Over the same time frame, the average number of papers per year with at least one amateur and one professional co-author is 5.4. These numbers are healthy for the AAVSO, although I would like to see the number of amateur-professional collaborations even larger.

Usually the first and the corresponding author are the same person. A straightforward reason for them not to be is that the submitting (and often corresponding) author must be an AAVSO member to avoid publication charges, but, for scientific/scholarly reasons, that person is not always the first author. Another case is that of student projects, where often the student author is listed first, but the faculty adviser

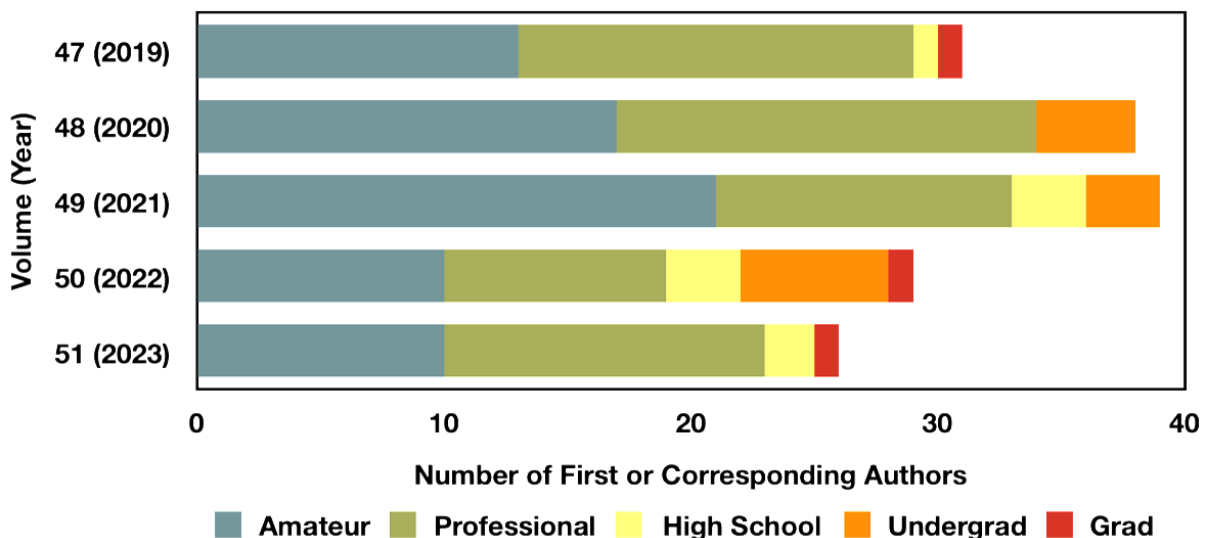


Figure 1. The number of first or corresponding authors in each of the most recent five volumes of *JAAVSO*, summed across all paper categories.

conducts correspondence with the journal because the student has graduated or otherwise moved on. Authors with whom I corresponded about a paper are included in the count, regardless of that person's place in the author list.

Some papers are authored by large groups of students; the total number of student authors (not just first authors) in the five-year period is about 100. However, I counted just first/ corresponding authors because only those individuals acquire the educational experience of interacting directly with the editor and the referee.

When I took on this editorship, I promised then-Executive Director Dr. Stella Kafka that I would help students approach a professional level of paper construction while preserving as much of their personal styles as possible. This commitment reflects the importance of the publication process in science education. When authors figure out how to explain their ideas clearly, they think deeply through the issues in their research and go on to do better science.

The importance of this concept came through strongly in a hybrid workshop held at the 242nd meeting of the American

Astronomical Society in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in June, 2023. Its organizers were Brian Kloppenborg (American Association of Variable Star Observers), Russell Genet (California Polytechnic State University), and Rachel Freed (Institute for Student Astronomical Research). Entitled, "Small Ground and Space Telescopes in the New Era of Big Telescope Surveys," the workshop included a full afternoon session (Session 3) on astronomy education via research with small telescopes. Most of the speakers' slides are available for download.¹ I attended portions of this workshop remotely. Several speakers (Russ Genet comes to mind in particular) emphasized the importance of publication as the culmination of a student research project, along with how rewarding it is to make the effort of advising a student on preparing a paper. Throughout my teaching and editorial careers, I have embraced this concept, and I will continue to do so.

I thank all our authors for their contributions, and I thank those who are advising students in research.

¹ <https://www.aavso.org/workshops/aas-242-sky-surveys-and-small-telescopes>