

Report on the *MLA Job Information List, 2010–11*

MLA Office of Research

Web publication, September 2011

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Report on the MLA *Job Information List*, 2010–11

IN 2010–11 the number of jobs advertised in the MLA *Job Information List* (*JIL*) stabilized. Compared with 2009–10, the number of jobs announced in 2010–11 rose by 90 (8.2%) in the English edition and by 73 (7.1%) in the foreign language edition, although the number of jobs advertised in 2010–11 remains at a level a third below the 2007–08 peak. In 2010–11 the *JIL*'s English edition announced 1,190 positions, compared with 1,100 in 2009–10; the foreign language edition announced 1,095 positions, compared with 1,022 in 2009–10. After trending upward between 2003–04 and 2007–08 (by 285 positions, or 18.5%, in English and 395 positions, or 30.7%, in foreign languages), the number of jobs advertised in the *JIL* declined by 726 (39.8%) in English and by 658 (39.2%) in foreign languages over the succeeding two years, 2008–09 and 2009–10. [Figure 1](#) shows the trend lines in the number of jobs advertised across the thirty-six years from 1975–76 to 2010–11. The 1,190 positions advertised in this past year's English edition remain 636 (34.8%) below the 2007–08 peak of 1,826; the 1,022 jobs advertised in the foreign language edition remain 585 (also 34.8%) below the 2007–08 peak of 1,680.

The number of ads in the 2010–11 *JIL* increased modestly, as did the number of departments and institutions placing them. As shown in [figure 2](#), the 2010–11 English edition contained 1,042 ads from 668 departments in 577 institutions. [Figure 3](#) shows the equivalent information for the foreign language edition, which contained 985 ads from 652 departments in 477 institutions. Despite the slight improvement, the number of ads and the number of departments and institutions placing them remain substantially below their 2007–08 levels—down by 604 ads (36.7%), 279 departments (29.5%), and 214 institutions (27.1%) in the English edition and down by 536 ads (35.2%), 290 departments (30.8%), and 177 institutions (27.1%) in the foreign language edition.¹

Both the number and proportion of ads for tenure-track positions were higher in 2010–11, after dropping more than ten percentage points, to 65% of the English edition and to 49% of the foreign language edition, between 2008–09 and 2009–10. In the 2010–11 English edition, the number of ads indexed as tenure-track grew by 101 (16.1%) since 2009–10 and made up 70.0% of the year's total. In the foreign language edition, the number of ads indexed as tenure-track grew by 87 (19.5%) since 2009–10 and made up 54.2% of the 2010–11 total. Until last year, between 75% and 80% of ads in English and between 60% and 65% of ads in foreign languages were consistently identified as tenure-track. At 70.0% in English and 54.2% in foreign languages this year, the percentage of ads for tenure-track positions falls midway between the established norm and last year's low ([fig. 4](#) and [fig. 5](#)).

Once again this year, departments announced more positions later in the year. For the second year in a row—and only the second time in the thirty-six-year history of the *JIL* counts—more ads appeared in the February, April, and Summer issues

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than in the October and December issues—52.6% of ads in the English edition and 60.0% of ads in the foreign language edition (fig. 6 and fig. 7). The number of jobs in the 2010 October English list—308—was the lowest October number on record; the 250 jobs in the 2010 October foreign language list exceeded by 50 last October's record low of 200 jobs. In part, the shift, especially the notable decline in ads appearing in the October issues, reflects changes connected with the *JIL*'s becoming an online searchable database that is updated weekly. The October issues match the database as initially released for searching in mid-September. That is, as a searchable database, the *JIL* makes the same set of ads available for searching online in mid-September that appear in the print issues published in mid-October. When the *JIL* was available only in print form, an ad that missed the deadline for October had to wait for the December print issue, which is not mailed until late November. Now an ad that misses the print deadline for October may become available to job seekers online in the third week of September. The economic recession, however, has clearly amplified the emergent trend toward a greater portion of the year's total appearing in December and later issues.

Almost all the positions announced in the *JIL* are full-time, and thus the *JIL* affords no insight into the scale of departments' hiring of part-time faculty members. The number of ads tagged as openings for full-time tenure-track assistant professors and for full-time non-tenure-track instructors does serve as a valuable barometer of trends in opportunities for full-time, entry-level academic employment in four-year institutions available to new and recent graduates of PhD programs. (Few two-year colleges elect to use the *JIL* to advertise openings on their faculties.) This year, in English, 541 (51.9%) of all 1,042 ads were indexed for both tenure-track and assistant professor; an additional 92 (8.8%) were tagged as tenure-track, assistant professor, and some other rank. In foreign languages, 384 (39.0%) of all 985 ads were indexed for both tenure-track and assistant professor; an additional 70 (7.1%) were tagged as tenure-track, assistant professor, and some other rank. Figure 8 and figure 9 show the modestly higher number and percentage share of ads for tenure-track assistant professors this year as compared with last—as well as the dramatic numerical decline that occurred after 2007–08.

Table 1 and table 2 show in more detail how departments have tagged their ads using the four index terms for rank—*instructor*, *assistant professor*, *associate professor*, and *professor*—across the eleven years from 2000–01 to 2010–11.

Table 3 and table 4 show detail for how departments have used the search terms for field specialization to tag ads across the eleven years 2000–01 to 2010–11. The percentage values represent the percentage of ads tagged using any given search term. Because departments use multiple search terms for each ad, the percentage values sum to a total far greater than 100% of each year's total number of ads. The percentage values for field specializations in the English edition show considerable stability across the eleven-year period, compared with the fluctuation in the number of ads. Across the eleven years, roughly 30% of ads have consistently been tagged as composition and rhetoric, another 30% as British literature, and roughly a third as American literature (including African American literature). In the foreign language edition, however, change is evident in the tagging of ads. Over the eleven-year period,

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the percentage of ads for Spanish has dropped from close to 50.0% to 42.3%, while the percentage tagged for Chinese has grown from 2.9% to 8.2%.

Note

1. The number of jobs is always somewhat greater than the number of ads, since some ads announce more than one job.

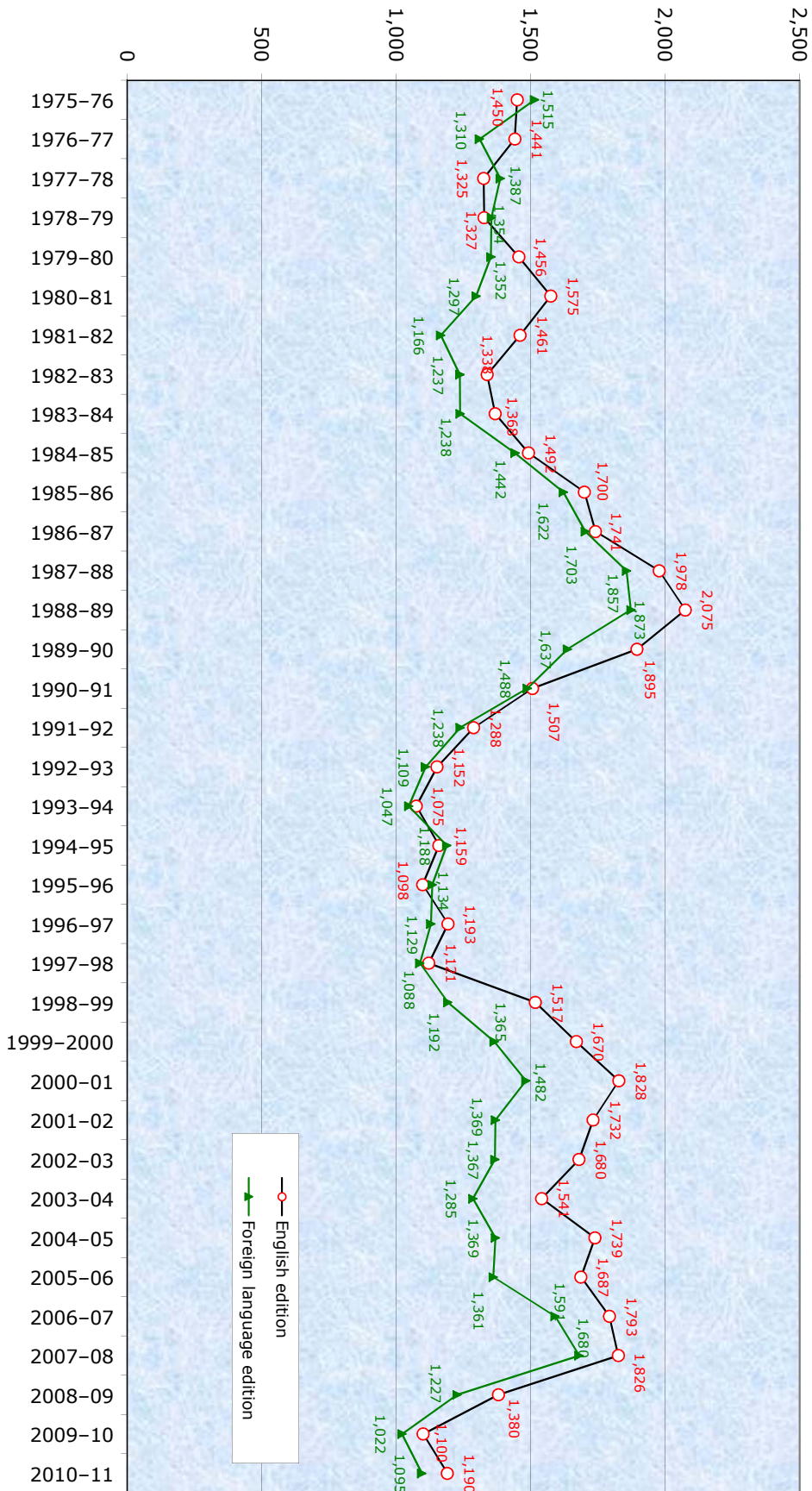


Fig. 1. Total Number of Jobs Advertised in the MLA JIL, 1975-76 to 2010-11

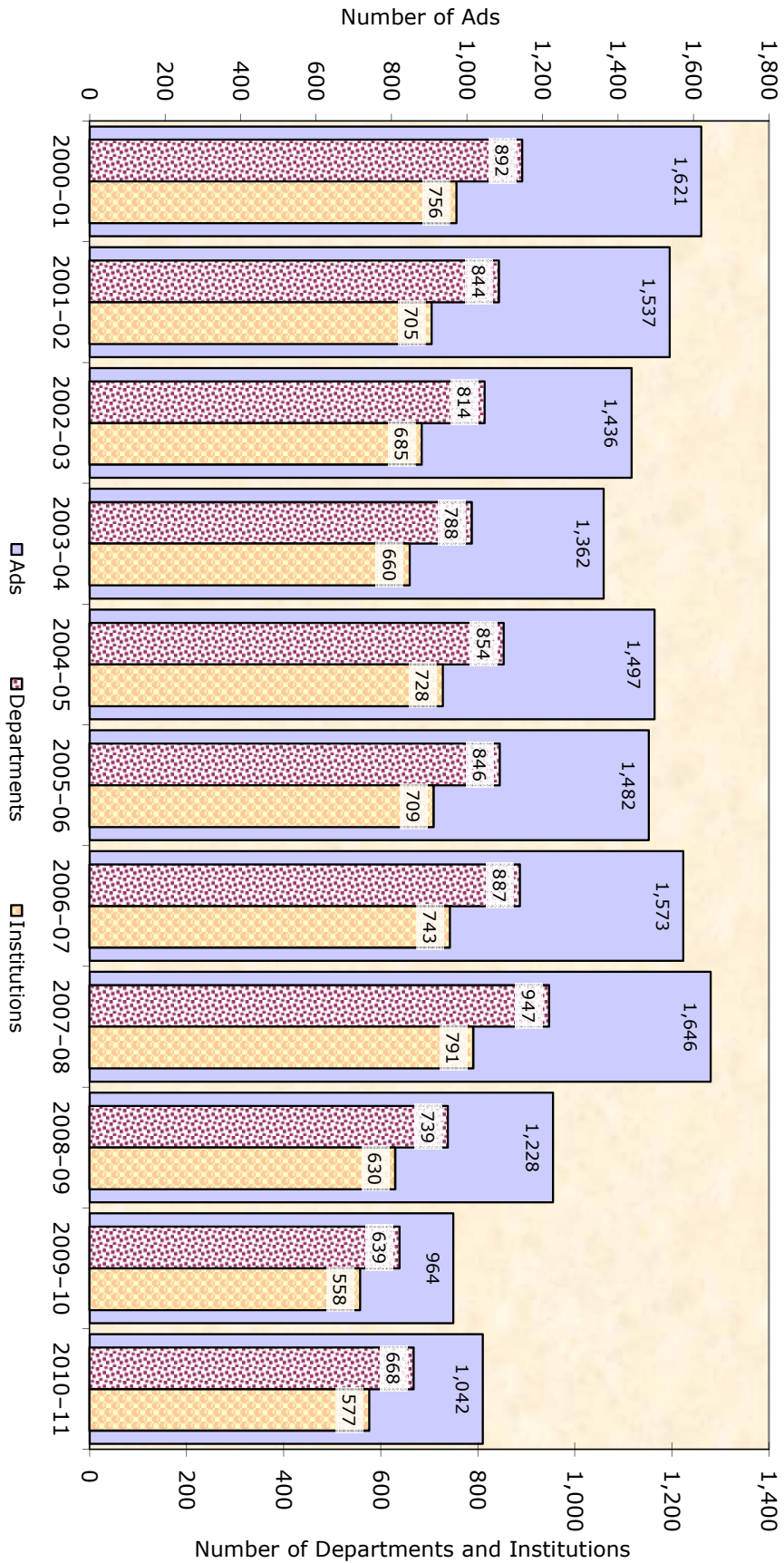


Fig. 2. Number of Ads Placed in the English *JIL* and the Number of Departments and Institutions Placing Ads, 2000-01 to 2010-11

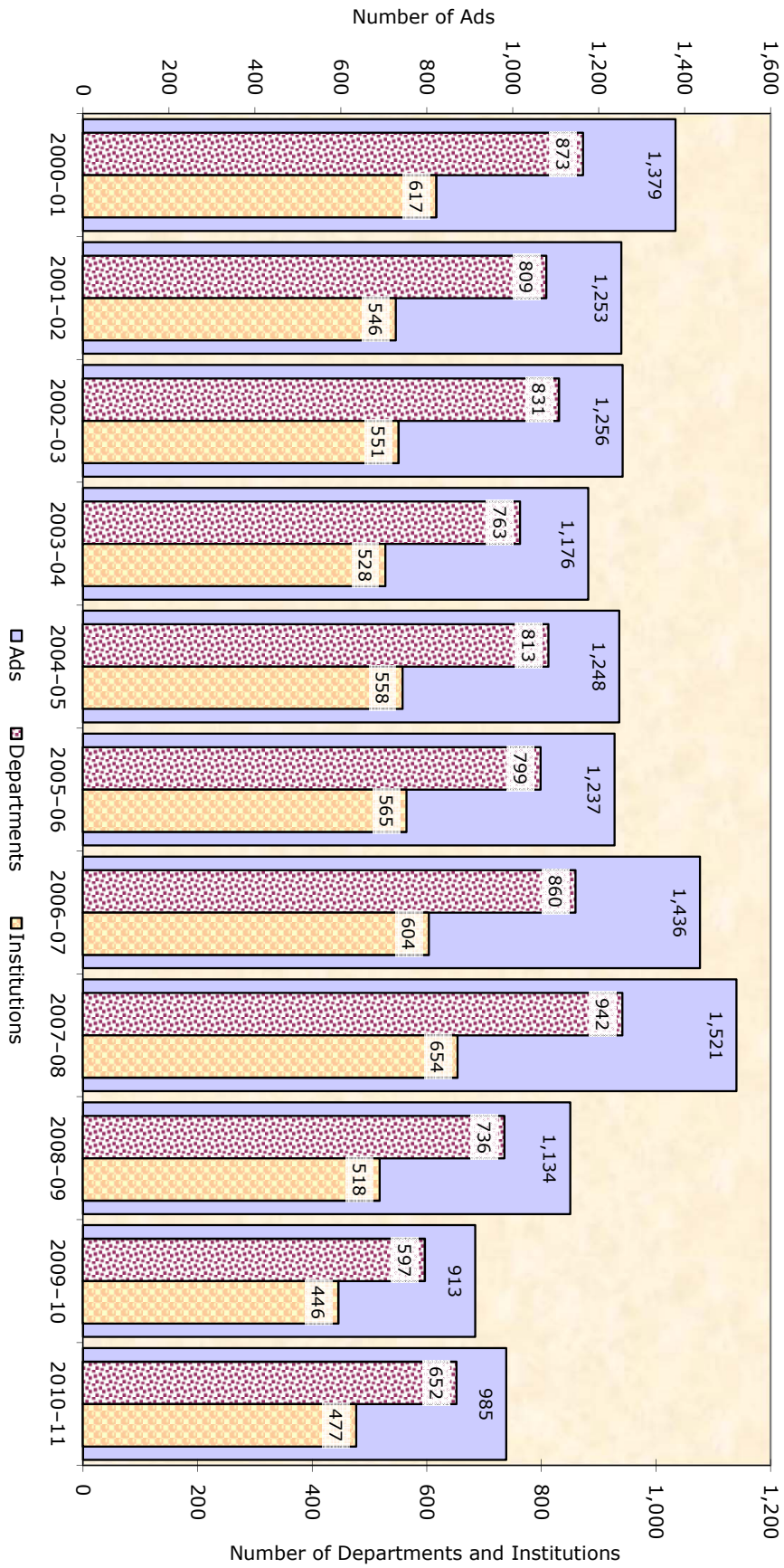


Fig. 3. Number of Ads Placed in the Foreign Language *JIL* and the Number of Departments and Institutions Placing Ads, 2000-01 to 2010-11

Fig. 4. Number and Percentage of Ads Indexed for Tenure Status in the English JIL, 2004–05 to 2010–11

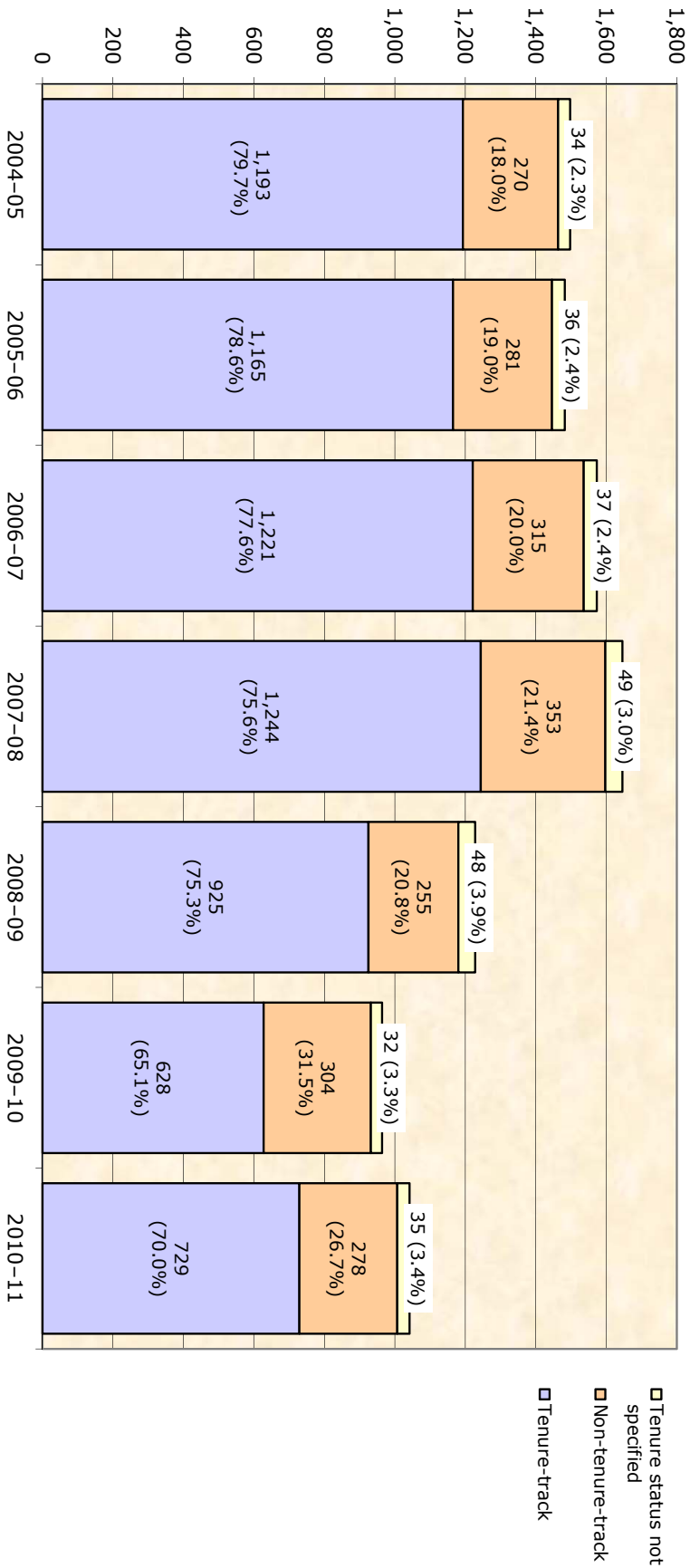
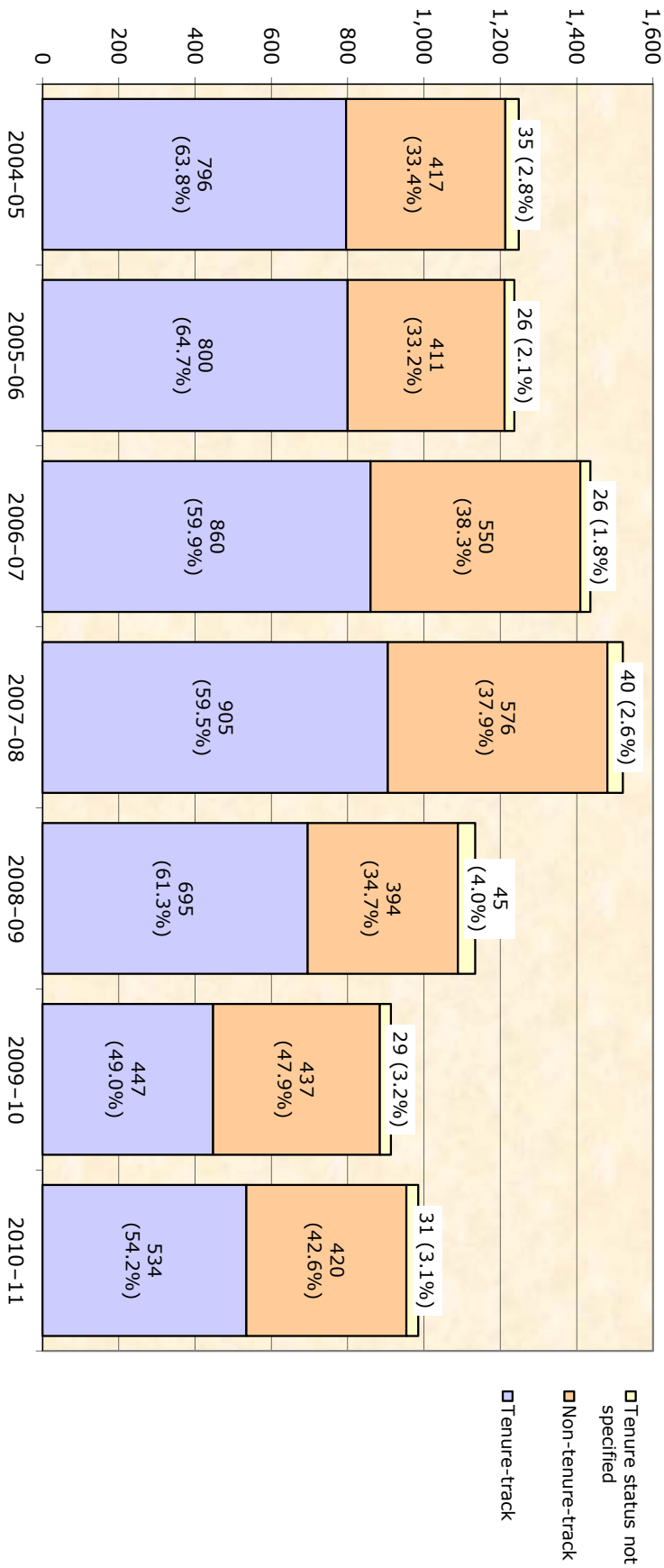


Fig. 5. Number and Percentage of Ads Indexed for Tenure Status in the Foreign Language *JIL*, 2004–05 to 2010–11



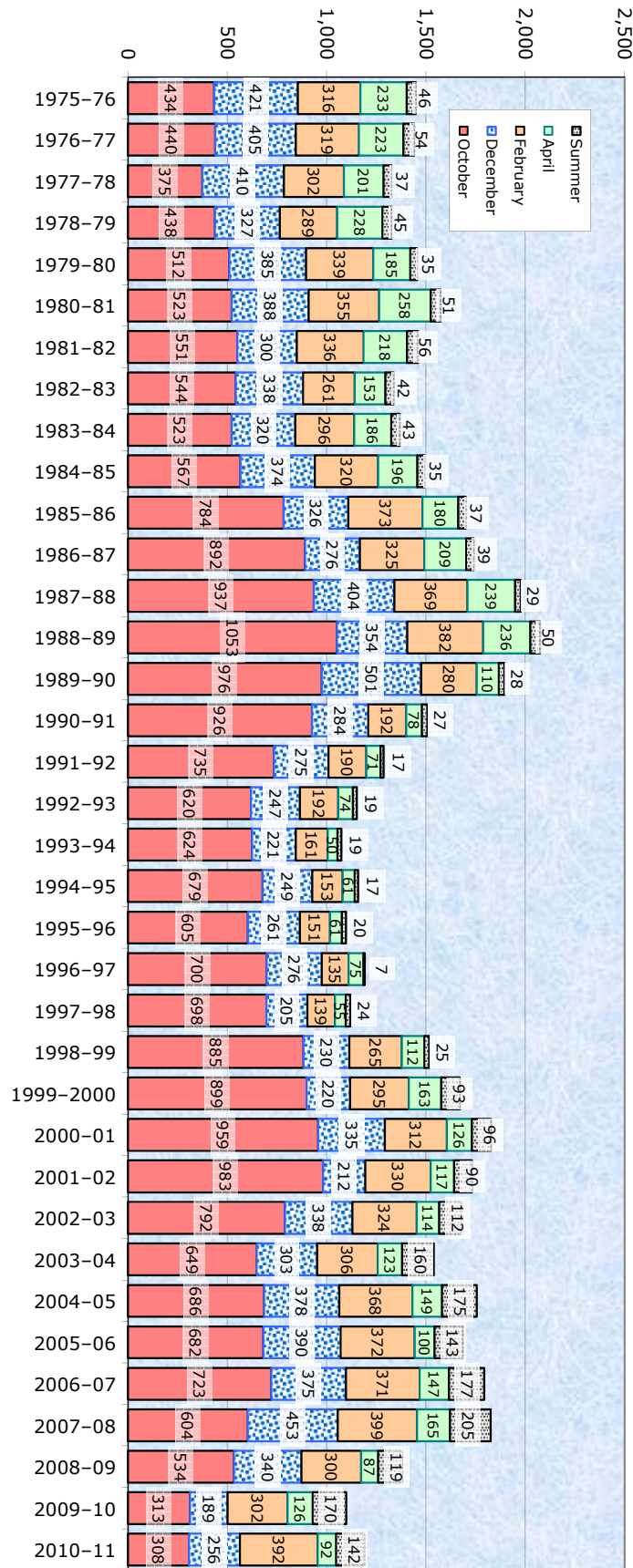


Fig. 6. Number of Positions Advertised in the Five Issues of the English JIL, 1975-76 to 2010-11

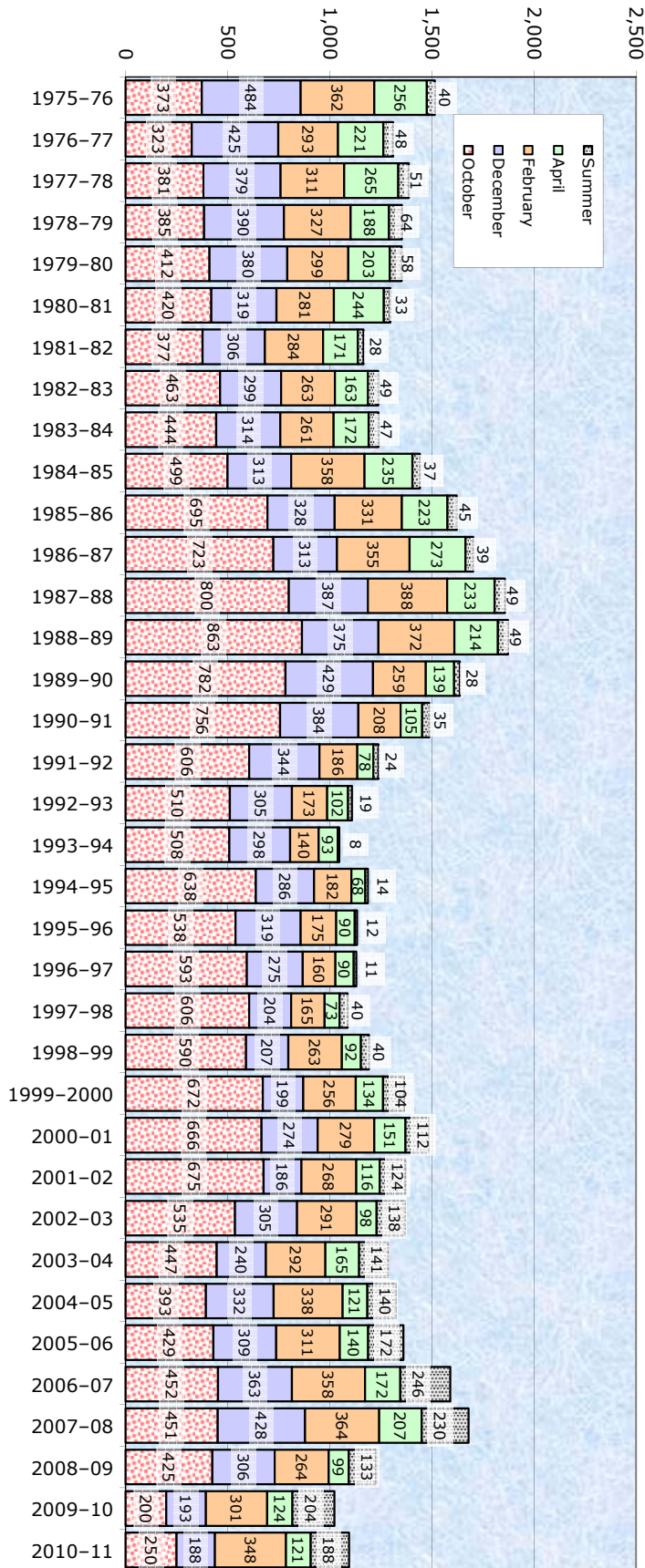


Fig. 7. Number of Positions Advertised in the Five Issues of the Foreign Language *JIL*, 1975-76 to 2010-11

Fig. 8. Number and Percentage of Ads Indexed for Tenure Status and Rank in the English JIL, 2004–05 to 2010–11

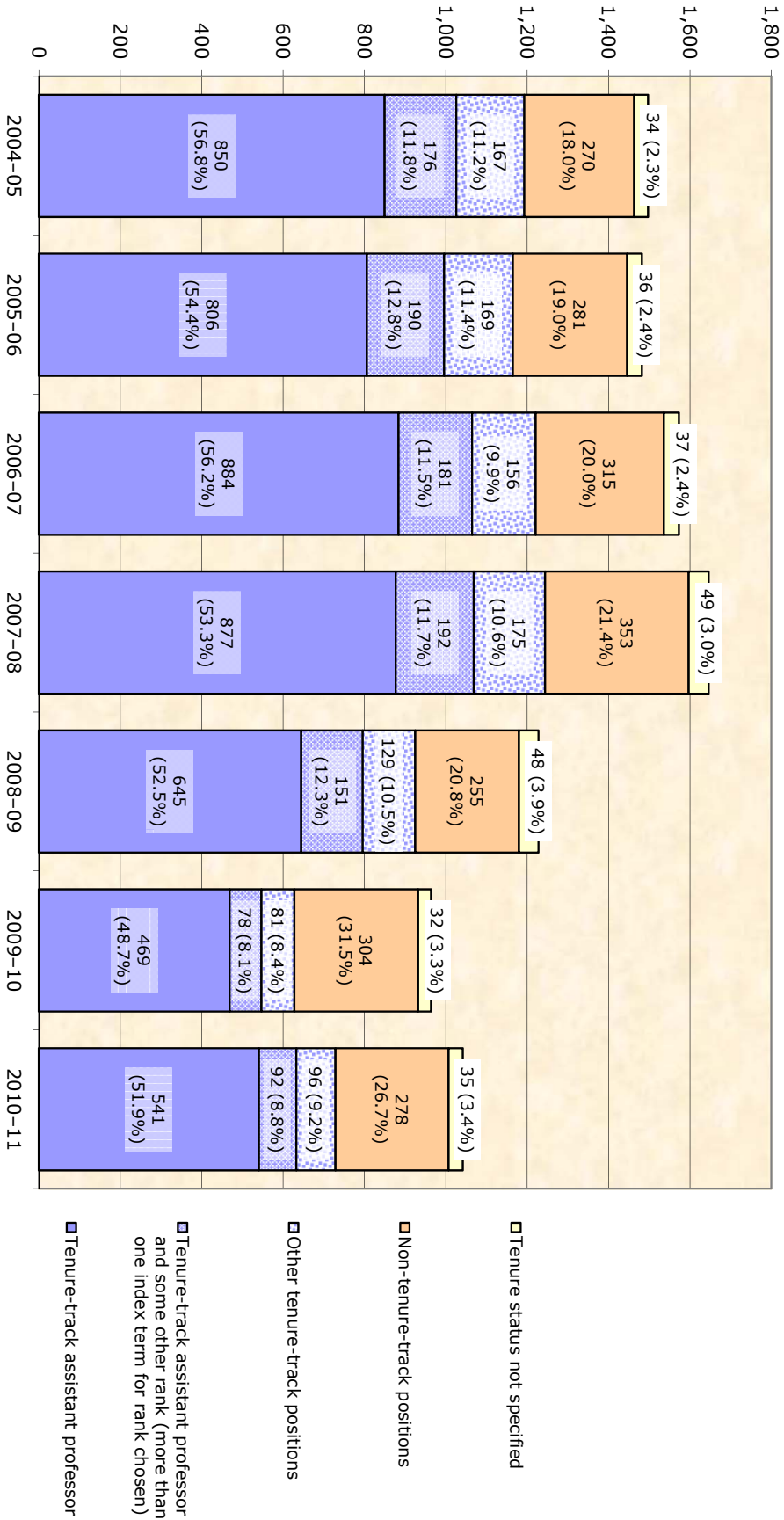


Fig. 9. Number and Percentage of Ads Indexed for Tenure Status and Rank in the Foreign Language *JIL*, 2004–05 to 2010–11

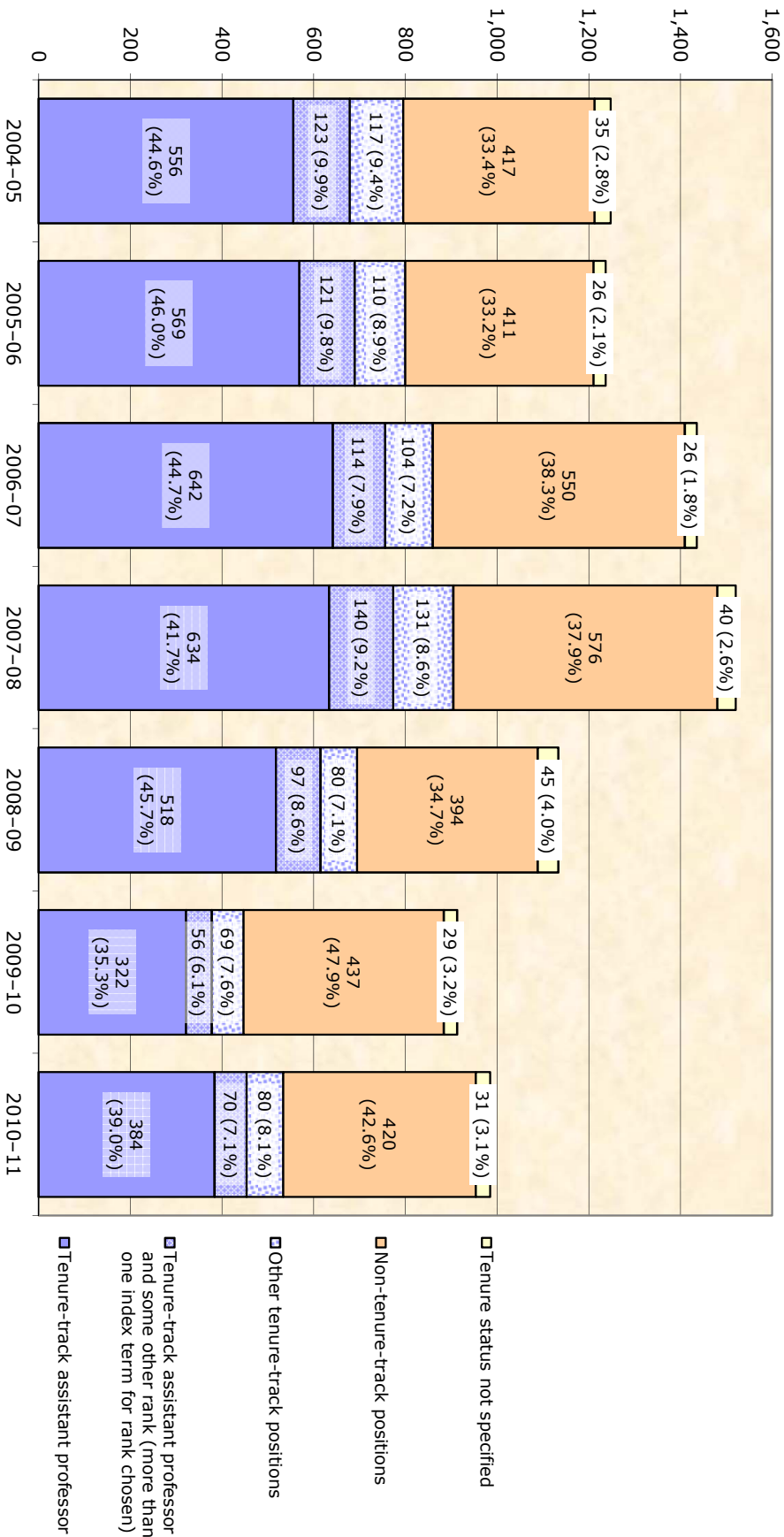


Table 1. Number and Percentage of Ads in the English J/L Indexed for Various Ranks, 2000-01 to 2010-11

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Assistant professor	1,025 63.2%	1,006 65.5%	963 67.1%	865 63.5%	956 63.9%	914 61.7%	1,005 63.9%	990 60.1%	714 58.1%	562 58.3%	643 61.7%
Instructor or assistant professor	44 2.7%	30 2.0%	36 2.5%	40 2.9%	35 2.3%	46 3.1%	37 2.4%	34 2.1%	18 1.5%	25 2.6%	27 2.6%
Assistant professor or associate professor	123 7.6%	105 6.8%	96 6.7%	122 9.0%	122 8.1%	121 8.2%	121 7.7%	125 7.6%	105 8.6%	49 5.1%	63 6.0%
Assistant professor, associate professor, or professor	64 3.9%	79 5.1%	52 3.6%	44 3.2%	53 3.5%	60 4.0%	53 3.4%	70 4.3%	55 4.5%	41 4.3%	24 2.3%
Other combinations including assistant professor	17 1.0%	10 0.7%	7 0.5%	8 0.6%	13 0.9%	13 0.9%	9 0.6%	12 0.7%	8 0.7%	9 0.9%	9 0.9%
Instructor	148 9.1%	123 8.0%	113 7.9%	103 7.6%	136 9.1%	125 8.4%	130 8.3%	178 10.8%	158 12.9%	157 16.3%	120 11.5%
Associate professor	17 1.0%	22 1.4%	17 1.2%	30 2.2%	21 1.4%	24 1.6%	27 1.7%	28 1.7%	17 1.4%	10 1.0%	19 1.8%
Associate professor or professor	62 3.8%	65 4.2%	50 3.5%	40 2.9%	62 4.1%	51 3.4%	77 4.9%	71 4.3%	45 3.7%	28 2.9%	28 2.7%
Professor	46 2.8%	39 2.5%	42 2.9%	55 4.0%	42 2.8%	61 4.1%	40 2.5%	54 3.3%	38 3.1%	23 2.4%	31 3.0%
Other combinations not including assistant professor	1 0.1%	1 0.1%	0 0.0%	1 0.1%	2 0.1%	3 0.2%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3 0.3%	0 0.0%
Rank not specified or not relevant	74 4.6%	57 3.7%	60 4.2%	54 4.0%	55 3.7%	64 4.3%	74 4.7%	84 5.1%	70 5.7%	57 5.9%	78 7.5%
Total	1,621 100.0%	1,537 100.0%	1,436 100.0%	1,362 100.0%	1,497 100.0%	1,482 100.0%	1,573 100.0%	1,646 100.0%	1,228 100.0%	964 100.0%	1,042 100.0%

Table 2. Number and Percentage of Ads in the Foreign Language JIL Indexed for Various Ranks, 2000-01 to 2010-11

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Assistant professor	791	739	765	667	689	686	791	779	635	452	503
	57.4%	59.0%	60.9%	56.7%	55.2%	55.5%	55.1%	51.2%	56.0%	49.5%	51.1%
Instructor or assistant professor	93	71	54	75	72	69	65	69	52	46	53
	6.7%	5.7%	4.3%	6.4%	5.8%	5.6%	4.5%	4.5%	4.6%	5.0%	5.4%
Assistant professor or associate professor	65	62	76	65	76	61	73	86	64	36	53
	4.7%	4.9%	6.1%	5.5%	6.1%	4.9%	5.1%	5.7%	5.6%	3.9%	5.4%
Assistant professor, associate professor, or professor	42	47	34	30	42	49	42	58	36	26	11
	3.0%	3.8%	2.7%	2.6%	3.4%	4.0%	2.9%	3.8%	3.2%	2.8%	1.1%
Other combinations including assistant professor	17	8	10	7	8	9	12	17	8	8	8
	1.2%	0.6%	0.8%	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	0.8%	1.1%	0.7%	0.9%	0.8%
Instructor	201	183	171	192	210	219	301	320	194	220	218
	14.6%	14.6%	13.6%	16.3%	16.8%	17.7%	21.0%	21.0%	17.1%	24.1%	22.1%
Associate professor	20	11	8	11	15	17	14	24	16	13	7
	1.5%	0.9%	0.6%	0.9%	1.2%	1.4%	1.0%	1.6%	1.4%	1.4%	0.7%
Associate professor or professor	49	45	50	48	56	50	49	43	34	26	32
	3.6%	3.6%	4.0%	4.1%	4.5%	4.0%	3.4%	2.8%	3.0%	2.8%	3.2%
Professor	33	31	27	26	29	34	29	43	26	26	28
	2.4%	2.5%	2.1%	2.2%	2.3%	2.7%	2.0%	2.8%	2.3%	2.8%	2.8%
Other combinations not including assistant professor	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	2	3	0
	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%
Rank not specified or not relevant	68	56	61	54	51	43	59	80	67	57	72
	4.9%	4.5%	4.9%	4.6%	4.1%	3.5%	4.1%	5.3%	5.9%	6.2%	7.3%
Total	1,379	1,253	1,256	1,176	1,248	1,237	1,436	1,521	1,134	913	985
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 3. Percentage of Ads Published in the English Jfl, 2000-01 to 2010-11, by Field-Specialization Index Term

Index term	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Composition and rhetoric	30.8	32.0	29.0	29.4	32.3	29.6	29.1	32.1	30.7	33.0	31.4
Technical and business writing	11.5	10.0	9.9	8.5	10.4	9.9	8.2	8.2	7.6	10.3	9.4
Creative writing	14.2	15.4	12.6	12.7	12.7	13.6	14.6	14.9	12.0	10.1	9.9
British literature	30.8	29.5	28.6	28.0	24.2	24.6	28.2	28.7	30.2	30.3	30.1
American literature	27.0	23.7	24.0	24.4	20.8	21.0	24.0	22.1	23.0	24.9	24.7
Literature in English other than British or American	13.6	12.9	12.6	12.8	0.0	0.0	11.8	7.4	9.7	10.0	8.6
African American literature	12.6	10.4	10.9	10.9	8.8	9.4	10.3	8.0	8.6	7.4	8.9
Other minority literatures	14.2	11.8	12.3	11.7	8.2	9.9	11.2	7.7	9.0	7.1	9.2
Postcolonial literature	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.8	8.2	8.8	6.6	9.4	8.0	7.6
World literature	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.4	8.8	9.9	7.4	9.3	9.4	10.0
Comparative literature	13.8	14.9	18.0	17.2	11.6	12.8	14.1	15.6	16.4	19.0	24.5
Generalist	15.4	13.7	11.4	12.5	12.2	11.8	10.9	14.1	9.9	13.2	13.4
Criticism, theory					6.3	5.7	6.7	6.9	7.3	7.6	9.1
Cultural studies					9.9	12.0	11.1	11.8	12.1	10.6	14.0
Film					4.9	6.4	6.7	6.5	6.8	7.8	8.3
Technology and digital media				7.7	6.5	8.5	9.8	10.6	9.0	11.1	14.1
Interdisciplinary					10.4	11.0	10.5	10.9	10.4	10.8	13.1
English education	7.9	8.7	7.6	7.4	6.7	6.3	7.4	7.8	9.2	9.3	8.4
Linguistics and ESL	11.0	11.5	10.8	9.8	12.3	11.1	9.1	13.4	12.3	12.6	15.0
Other fields of specialization	16.6	20.0	23.7	24.2	6.0	14.7	19.8	21.4	22.2	25.3	27.4
Department chair and other administrative	9.0	9.5	7.2	9.9	13.1	14.0	8.3	8.9	8.9	7.6	7.4
Nonacademic	1.8	1.6	1.2	1.0	1.3	0.6	1.4	1.4	0.2	1.6	0.8
Spanish	1.8	2.3	2.0	1.3	1.8	1.1	1.4	2.1	2.5	3.6	3.5
Latin America	1.0	1.4	1.7	1.3	0.9	0.7	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.6	1.2
Portuguese	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.5
French	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.1	0.7	0.7	1.8	2.4	3.3	3.1
Francophone studies	0.3	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.3
Italian	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.5	1.0	1.1
German and Scandinavian	0.7	1.2	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.7	1.0	1.6	2.0	3.0	2.4
Russian and Slavic	0.1	1.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.7	1.7	1.2
Arabic	0.1	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.6	1.0	0.8	0.8	1.1	1.3
Hebrew	0.2	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.6
Classical	0.3	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.5	1.0	0.7
Chinese	0.3	0.9	0.9	0.5	0.3	0.7	1.0	0.4	0.7	1.5	1.6
Japanese	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.6	1.0
Other languages	1.2	1.2	0.9	2.0	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.2	1.6	2.6	3.0
Number of ads (basis for percentages)	1,621	1,537	1,436	1,362	1,497	1,482	1,573	1,646	1,228	964	1,042

Notes

Departments may use multiple index terms to classify their ads, therefore the percentage of ads indexed for various field specialties adds up to a total greater than 100%.

The list of terms available for departments to index their ads has varied from year to year; blank cells indicate years when a given term was not available.

In any given year some 150 to 300 ads call for specializations in both English and foreign languages and appear in both the English and foreign language editions; both English and foreign language index terms are available to classify these ads.

Table 4. Percentage of Ads Published in the Foreign Language JIL, 2000-01 to 2010-11, by Field-Specialization Index Term

Index term	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Spanish	48.4	49.7	45.8	45.7	46.6	45.4	42.8	43.7	42.9	43.0	42.3
Latin America	13.4	13.2	13.5	12.5	13.9	12.9	11.6	11.8	12.2	13.3	9.8
Portuguese	2.0	3.2	2.5	3.1	2.9	2.7	3.3	3.2	3.0	2.2	3.9
French	18.8	17.7	17.8	16.3	19.6	16.8	17.8	16.5	16.8	18.6	19.0
Francophone studies	3.8	3.9	4.5	4.0	5.0	4.0	5.2	4.8	5.7	5.5	4.6
Italian	7.3	5.8	6.7	6.5	7.1	5.8	7.4	6.6	7.0	5.9	6.4
German and Scandinavian	11.4	12.7	9.6	11.7	11.0	11.0	10.9	11.8	11.6	11.6	11.3
Russian and Slavic	3.3	4.7	4.1	3.7	3.0	3.8	2.1	2.4	4.4	4.6	4.8
Arabic	1.2	1.7	1.9	2.6	3.3	4.6	5.0	3.9	5.3	5.5	7.3
Chinese	2.9	4.3	4.7	2.6	2.6	4.3	7.5	6.0	7.1	8.3	8.2
Japanese	3.0	3.9	3.0	2.6	3.2	4.0	3.8	2.6	3.1	4.1	4.0
Hebrew	1.0	1.4	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.6	1.2
Classical	1.3	1.5	2.0	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.6	1.1	1.1	1.8	0.9
Other languages	3.3	4.4	3.6	4.7	4.2	5.7	4.8	4.9	5.8	7.0	6.6
Linguistics and ESL	16.5	16.4	16.0	13.4	17.4	15.8	12.3	15.4	14.0	13.9	16.5
Comparative literature	13.7	15.2	19.7	18.4	12.4	15.8	13.4	16.5	16.9	17.1	22.2
World literature					2.6	3.2	3.3	2.9	3.5	3.2	4.1
Cultural studies					6.0	5.5	4.4	5.9	5.6	5.9	7.8
Postcolonial literature					1.2	1.5	1.5	1.6	2.2	2.5	2.0
Criticism, theory					2.8	1.8	1.8	2.7	3.5	3.6	4.8
Film					1.7	1.6	1.5	3.2	2.8	3.1	4.2
Technology and digital media				5.9	4.6	4.4	4.9	5.7	4.1	4.4	7.8
Interdisciplinary					5.4	4.9	5.6	6.3	5.8	6.4	7.9
Generalist	19.9	20.6	18.2	13.1	11.1	10.9	7.1	6.0	6.5	6.0	5.9
Department chair and other administrative	5.5	5.7	5.1	7.7	10.4	9.1	7.5	7.6	7.0	6.2	7.0
American literature	2.6	3.5	3.1	2.6	2.6	1.9	2.0	2.5	4.1	4.8	4.1
African American literature	2.4	1.1	2.4	1.8	1.4	1.0	0.8	1.0	1.6	1.8	1.8
Other minority literatures	2.9	3.4	4.6	3.7	3.1	2.7	2.9	2.2	2.3	2.1	3.6
British literature	2.0	2.8	2.0	1.8	2.2	1.5	1.3	2.6	3.9	4.8	4.1
Literature in English other than British or American	2.0	3.3	3.6	3.3	0.0	0.0	1.3	1.6	2.0	2.4	2.0
Composition and rhetoric	1.3	1.0	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.7	1.1	0.6	1.1	1.3
Technical and business writing	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2
Creative writing	0.6	1.3	0.8	1.0	0.3	0.3	0.7	0.4	0.4	1.0	0.5
English education	1.0	1.0	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.5	0.8	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.5
Other fields of specialization	11.4	16.2	18.8	20.6	8.6	14.9	17.9	18.9	19.0	21.6	25.9
Nonacademic	2.2	2.1	1.5	1.3	1.1	0.8	1.2	1.1	0.3	1.3	1.2
Number of ads (basis for percentages)	1,379	1,253	1,256	1,176	1,248	1,237	1,436	1,521	1,134	913	985

Notes

Departments may use multiple index terms to classify their ads, therefore the percentage of ads indexed for various field specialties adds up to a total greater than 100%.

The list of terms available for departments to index their ads has varied from year to year; blank cells indicate years when a given term was not available.

In any given year some 150 to 300 ads call for specializations in both English and foreign languages and appear in both the English and foreign language editions; both English and foreign language index terms are available to classify these ads.