

Report on the *MLA Job Information List, 2009–10*

MLA Office of Research

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Report on the MLA *Job Information List*, 2009–10

IN 2009–10, for the second year in a row, hiring in English and other modern languages contracted sharply, as measured by the number of ads and jobs in the MLA *Job Information List* (*JIL*). This year the *JIL*'s English edition announced 1,100 jobs and the foreign language edition 1,022 jobs. At 1,022, the number of jobs in the foreign language edition is the smallest on record—25 fewer than the previous low of 1,047 in 1993–94. The 1,100 jobs advertised in the English edition are 25 greater than the previous low of 1,075, also in 1993–94. 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 succeeding two years, 2008–09 and 2009–10, have seen the number of jobs advertised in the *JIL* decline by 726 (39.8%) in English and by 658 (39.2%) in foreign languages. [Fig. 1](#) shows the trend lines in the number of jobs advertised in the *JIL* across the thirty-five years from 1975–76 to 2009–10.¹

The severity of the contraction in faculty hiring is also attested to by the decline in the number of institutions and departments placing ads since 2007–08. In 2007–08 (the recent peak), 947 departments and 791 institutions placed 1,646 ads in the *JIL*'s English edition. This past year (2009–10), those numbers shrank to 964 ads from 639 departments and 558 institutions, a two-year decline of 41.4% in the number of ads and 32.5% in the number of departments and 29.5% in the number of institutions that placed ads ([fig. 2](#)). In 2007–08, 942 departments and 654 institutions placed 1,521 ads in the *JIL*'s foreign language edition. In 2009–10, those numbers shrank to 913 ads from 597 departments and 446 institutions, representing a two-year decline of 40.0% in the number of ads and 36.6% in the number of departments and 31.8% in the number of institutions that placed ads ([fig. 3](#)).

Especially notable this year is the decline in the percentage of ads indexed as tenure-track ([fig. 4](#) and [fig. 5](#)). Across the five years from 2004–05 to 2008–09, ads indexed as tenure-track made up, on average, 77.4% of each year's total in English and 61.8% of each year's total in foreign languages. In 2009–10, however, the percentage of tenure-track ads fell 10 percentage points or more, to 65.1% in English and 49.0% in foreign languages. The number of ads indexed as non-tenure-track actually increased this year, by 49 ads in English and 43 in foreign languages compared with 2008–09 (the total number of ads declined 264 in English and 221 in foreign languages). By contrast, although the number of ads also fell in 2008–09 (25.4% from 2007–08 for both English and foreign languages), ads indexed as tenure-track continued to make up 75.3% of the total in English and 61.3% of the total in foreign languages—close to the recent averages.

Compared with previous years, departments advertised searches later in 2009–10 ([fig. 6](#) and [fig. 7](#)). The *JIL*'s October issues contained the smallest number of jobs on record by far—only 313 jobs in the English edition and 200 in the foreign language edition of the October 2009 *JIL*. Until this year, the smallest number of jobs advertised in an October issue was 375 in English (in 1977) and 323 in foreign

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languages (in 1976). For the first time in the *JIL*'s thirty-five-year history, more jobs were advertised in the February, April, and Summer issues—54.4% of the year's total in English and 61.5% of the year's total in foreign languages—than in the October and December issues. Across the thirty-five years from 1975–76 to 2009–10, the October and December issues have together, on average, announced 1,000 jobs in the English edition, or 67.0% of the year's total, and 850 in the foreign language edition, or 62.8% of the year's total. This year's October-December totals were half the thirty-five-year average—502 for English (45.6% of the total for 2009–10) and 393 for foreign languages (38.5% of the 2009–10 total). The number of jobs advertised in the October and December issues was dramatically smaller in 2009 than in 2008—down 41.4% and 44.4%, respectively, in English and down 52.9% and 36.9%, respectively, in foreign languages—while the number of jobs advertised in the issues for February, April, and Summer 2010 was either even with its 2009 counterpart or substantially larger. In foreign languages, the February, April, and Summer 2010 issues contained 37 (14.0%), 25 (25.3%), and 71 (53.4%) more jobs than their 2009 counterparts. In English in 2010, the number of jobs advertised in the February, April, and Summer issues was 2 (0.7%), 39 (44.8%), and 51 (42.9%) greater than in the equivalent issues of the previous year. Only time will tell whether this shift will prove a short-term effect of the financial crisis that erupted in fall 2008 or a deeper long-term change in how departments advertise and fill positions.

Virtually all positions announced in the *JIL* are full-time, and the *JIL* thus 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 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.) Between 2007–08 and 2009–10, the number of ads tagged as both tenure-track and assistant professor fell by almost half, from 877 to 469 in the English edition (fig. 8) and from 634 to 322 in the foreign language edition (fig. 9). In 2009–10, the percentage share as well as the number of ads for tenure-track assistant professors fell. From 2004–05 to 2008–09, ads tagged as both tenure-track and assistant professor consistently made up between 50% and 55% of the year's total in English and between 40% and 45% in foreign languages. An additional 12% of ads in the English edition and 9% of ads in the foreign language edition, on average, were tagged as both tenure-track and assistant professor in combination with another rank category (instructor, associate professor, or professor). This year in English, 469 (48.7%) of all 964 ads were tagged for both tenure-track and assistant professor; an additional 78 (8.1%) were tagged as tenure-track, assistant professor, and some other rank. In foreign languages, 322 (35.3%) of this year's 913 ads were tagged for both tenure-track and assistant professor; an additional 56 (6.1%) were tagged as tenure-track, assistant professor, and some other rank.

Table 1 (English) and table 2 (foreign languages) 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 ten years from 2000–01 to 2009–10.

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Table 3 and table 4 show detail for how listings have been tagged for field specialization across the ten years from 2000–01 to 2009–10. Because departments use multiple index terms to tag each ad, the number of ads tagged with the various field index terms adds to a total greater than the number of ads published. The percentage values represent the percentage of published ads tagged using any given index term. The percentage values show considerable stability over time compared with fluctuations in the number of ads. Across the ten years, roughly 30% of ads in the English edition have been tagged with the terms composition and rhetoric, British literature, and American literature (including African American literature). Tagging of ads in the foreign language edition shows change: the percentage of ads tagged for Spanish has dropped from close to 50% to 43%, while the percentage tagged for Chinese has grown from between 2% and 4% to between 6% and 8%.

David Laurence

Note

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1. The number of jobs advertised is not the same as the number of ads, since some ads advertise more than one job.

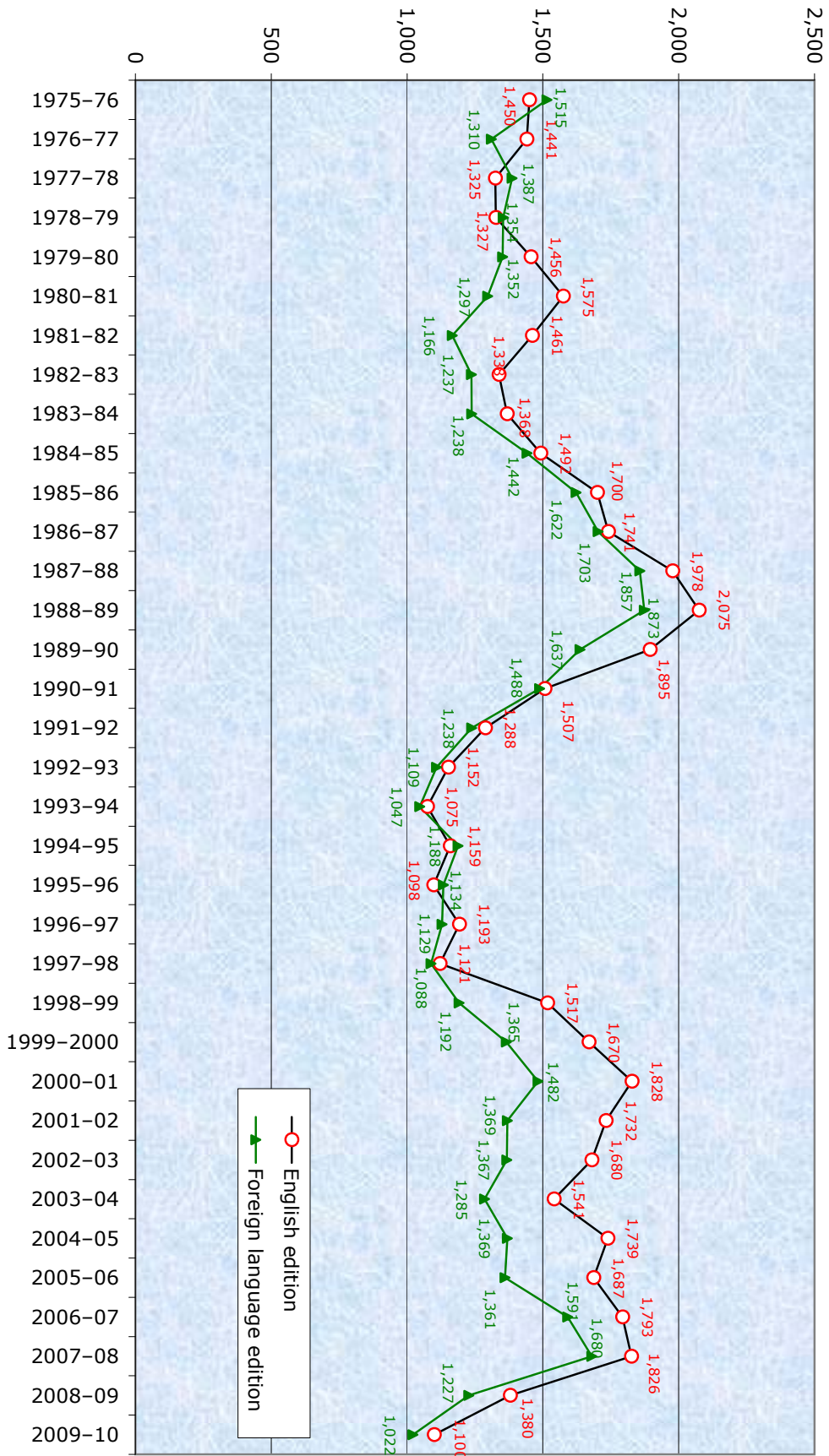


Fig. 1. Total Number of Jobs Advertised in the MLA Job Information List, 1975-76 to 2009-10

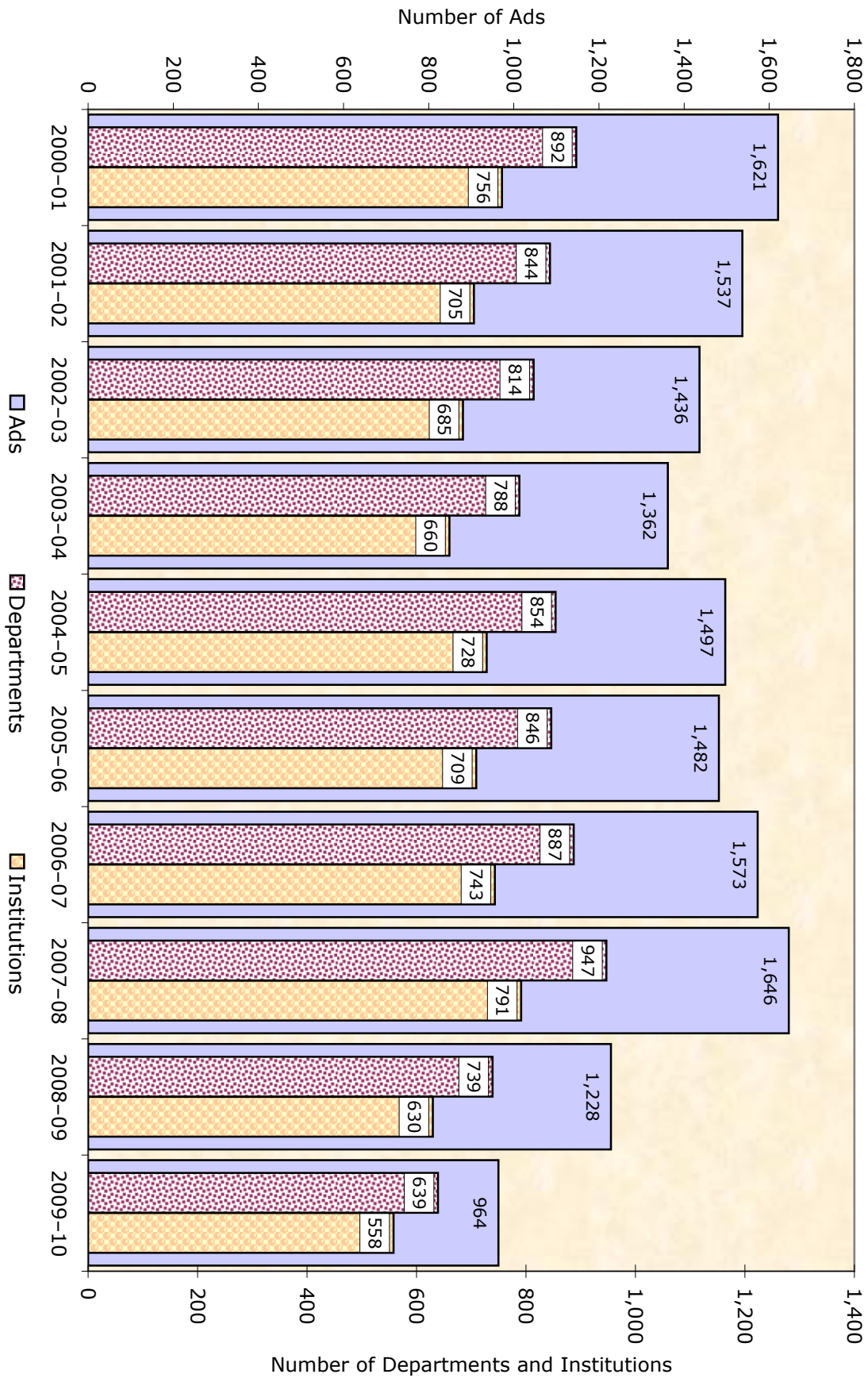


Fig. 2. Number of Ads Placed in the *JIL*'s English Edition and the Number of Departments and Institutions Placing Ads, 2000-01 to 2009-10

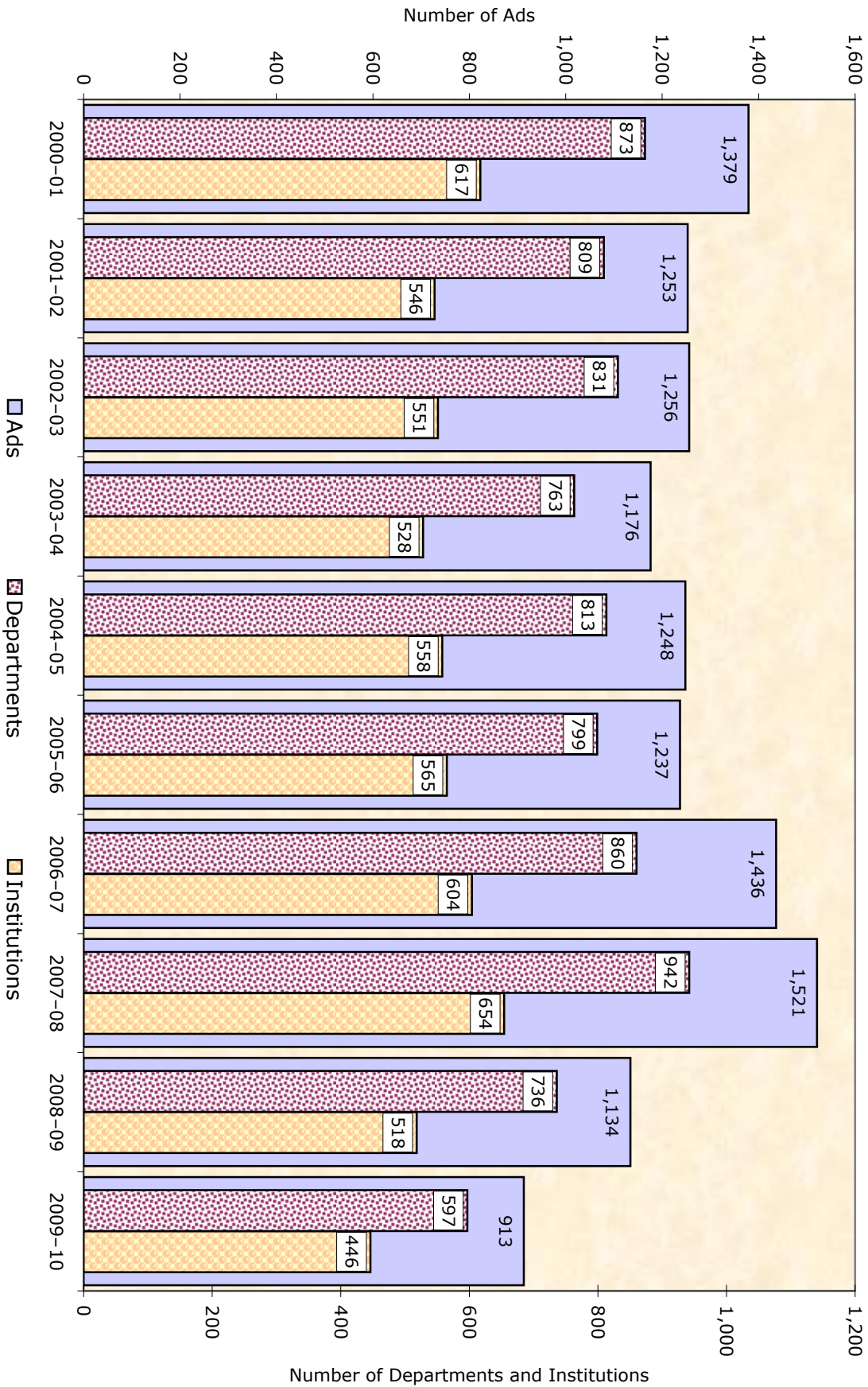


Fig. 3. Number of Ads Placed in the *JIL*'s Foreign Language Edition and the Number of Departments and Institutions Placing Ads, 2000-01 to 2009-10

Fig. 4. Number and Percentage of Ads Indexed as Tenure-Track, Non-Tenure-Track, or with Tenure Status Not Specified in the English JIL, 2004–05 to 2009–10

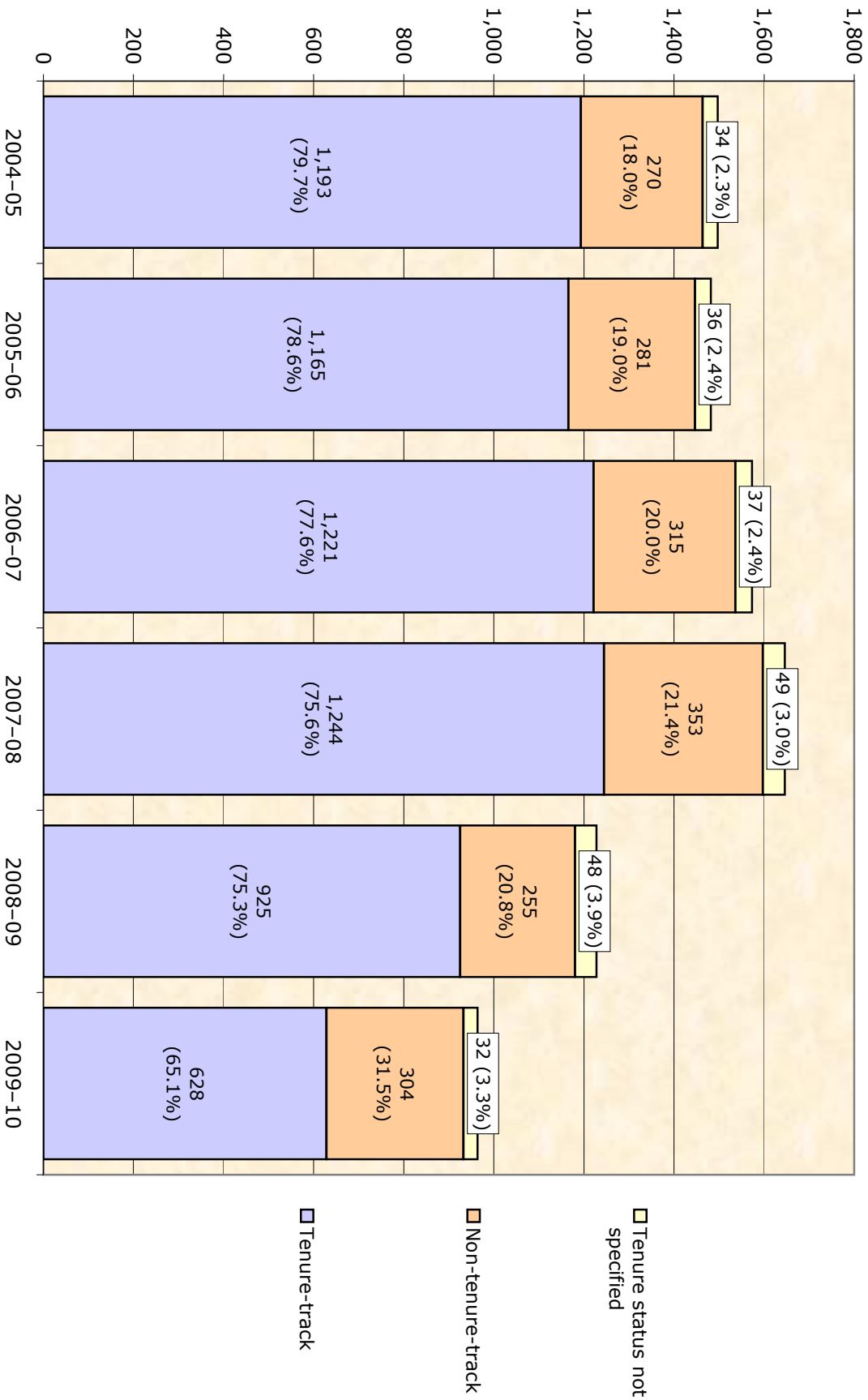
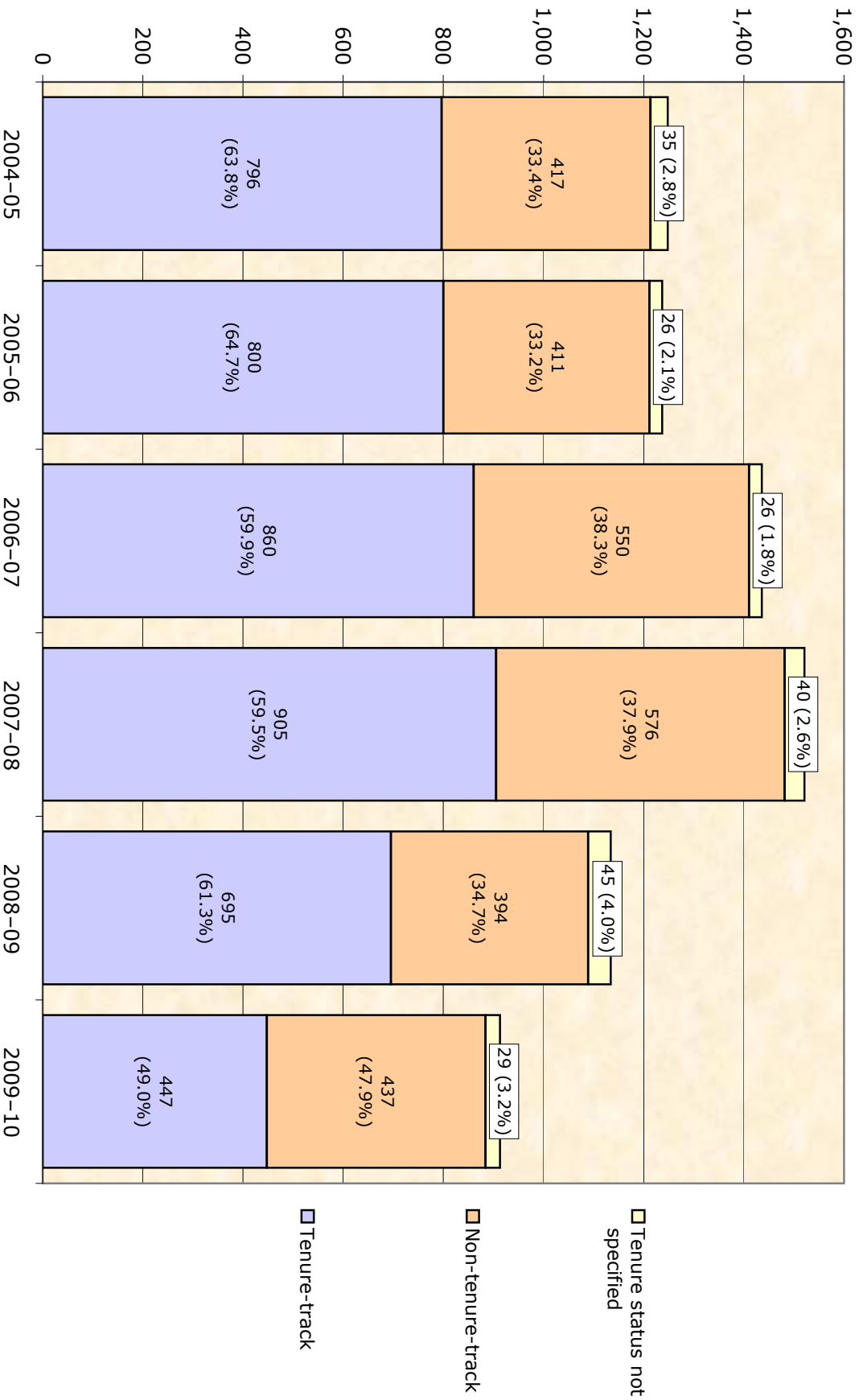


Fig. 5. Number and Percentage of Ads Indexed as Tenure-Track, Non-Tenure-Track, or with Tenure Status Not Specified in the Foreign Language *JIL*, 2004–05 to 2009–10



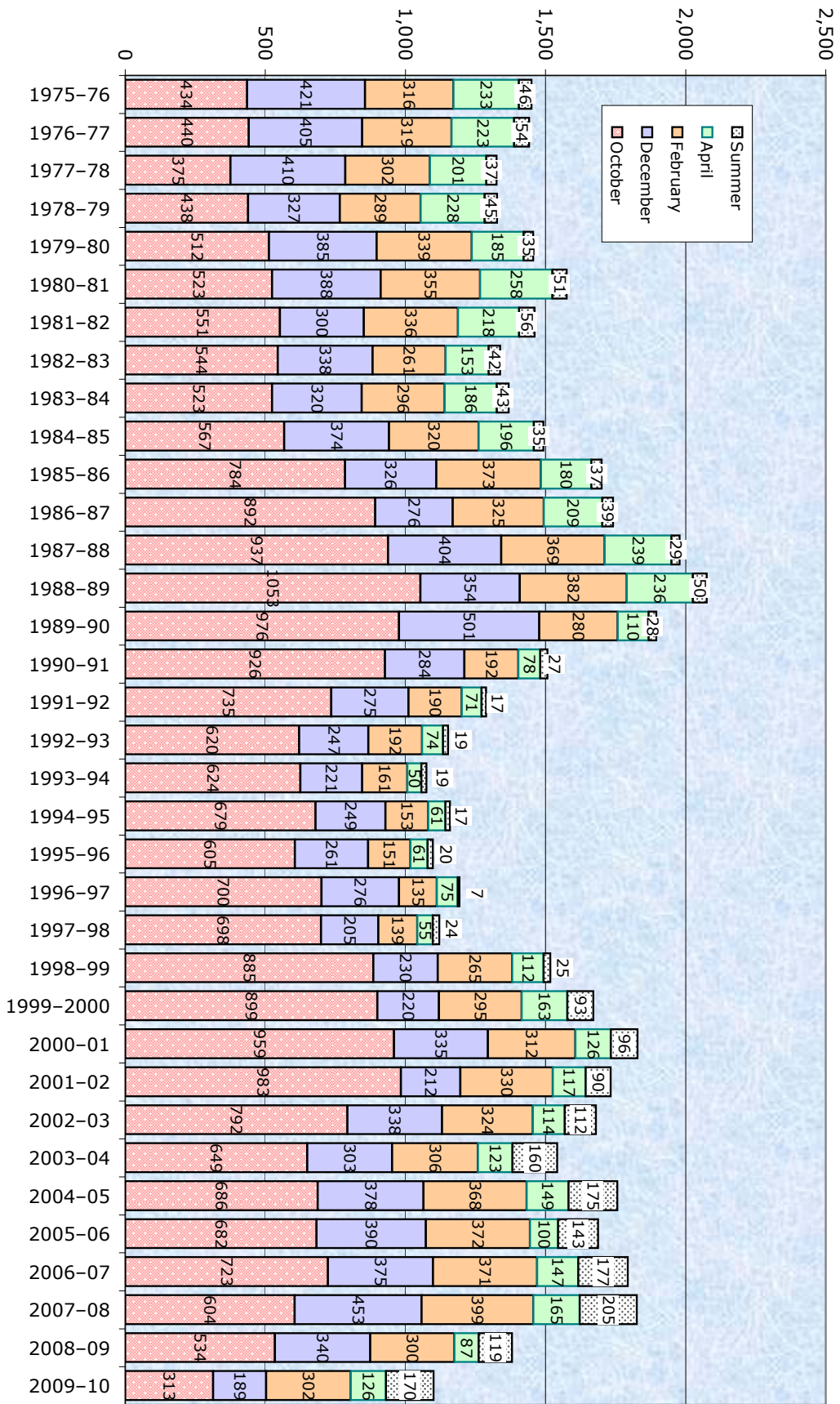


Fig. 6. The Number of Positions Advertised in the Five Seasonal Issues of the English *JIL*, 1975-76 to 2009-10

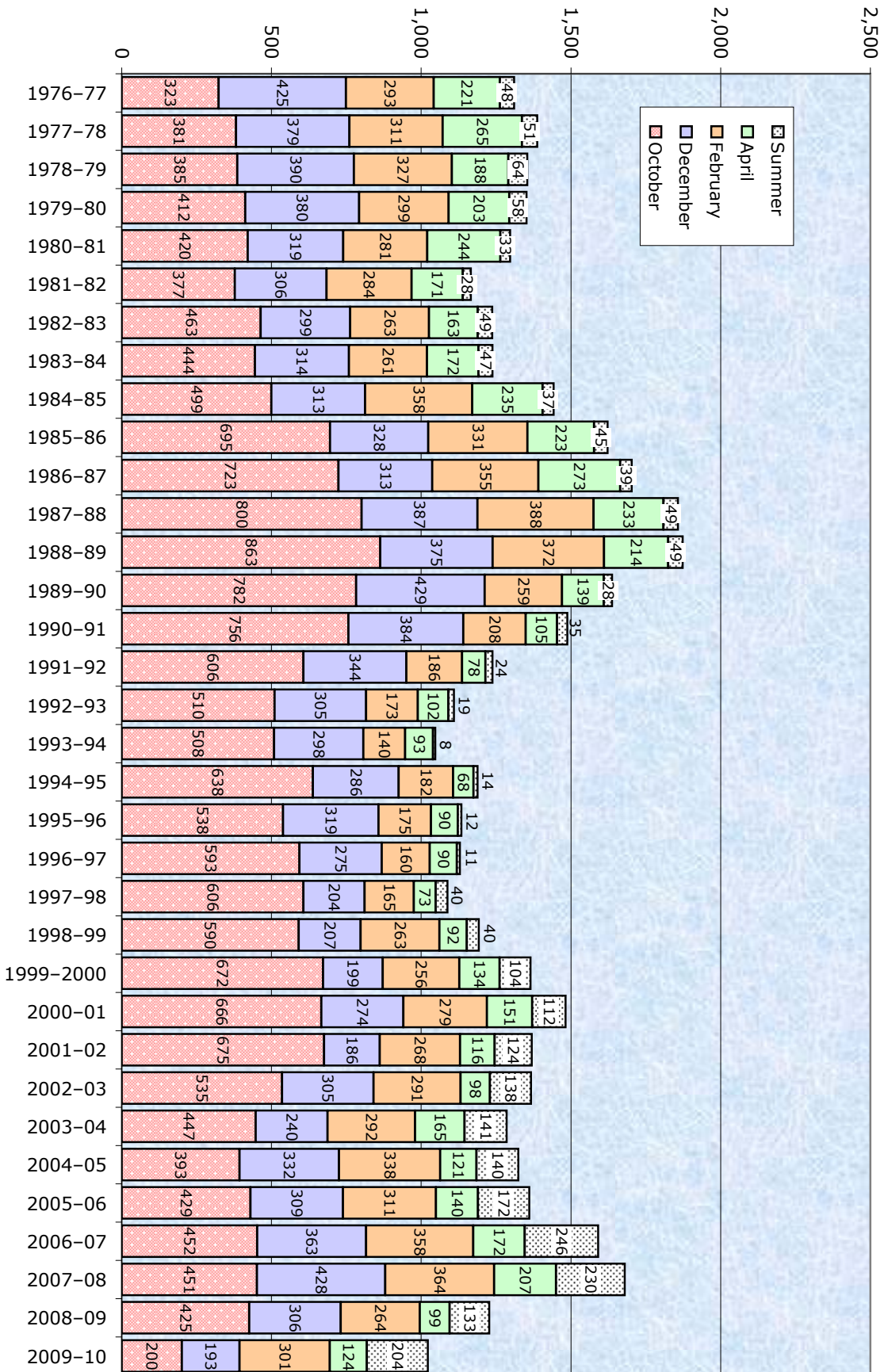
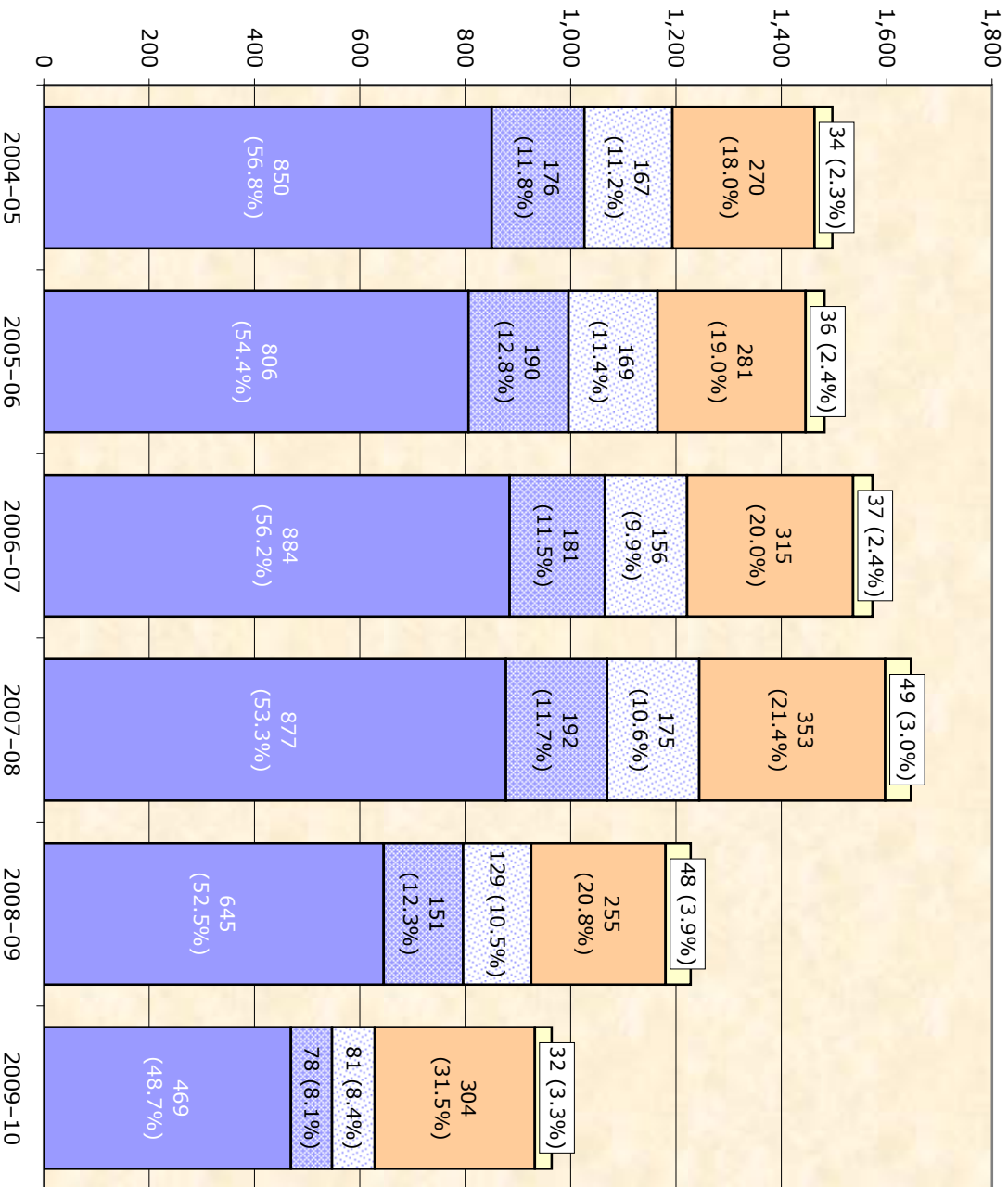


Fig. 7. The Number of Positions Advertised in the Five Seasonal Issues of the *Foreign Language JIL*, 1975-76 to 2009-10

Fig. 8. Number and Percentage of Ads Indexed for Tenure Status and Rank in the English *JIL*, 2004–05 to 2009–10



- Tenure status not specified
- Non-tenure-track positions
- Other tenure-track positions
- Tenure-track assistant professor and some other rank (more than one index term for rank chosen)
- Tenure-track assistant professor

Fig. 9. Number and Percentage of Ads Indexed for Tenure Status and Rank in the Foreign Language *JLL*, 2004–05 to 2009–10

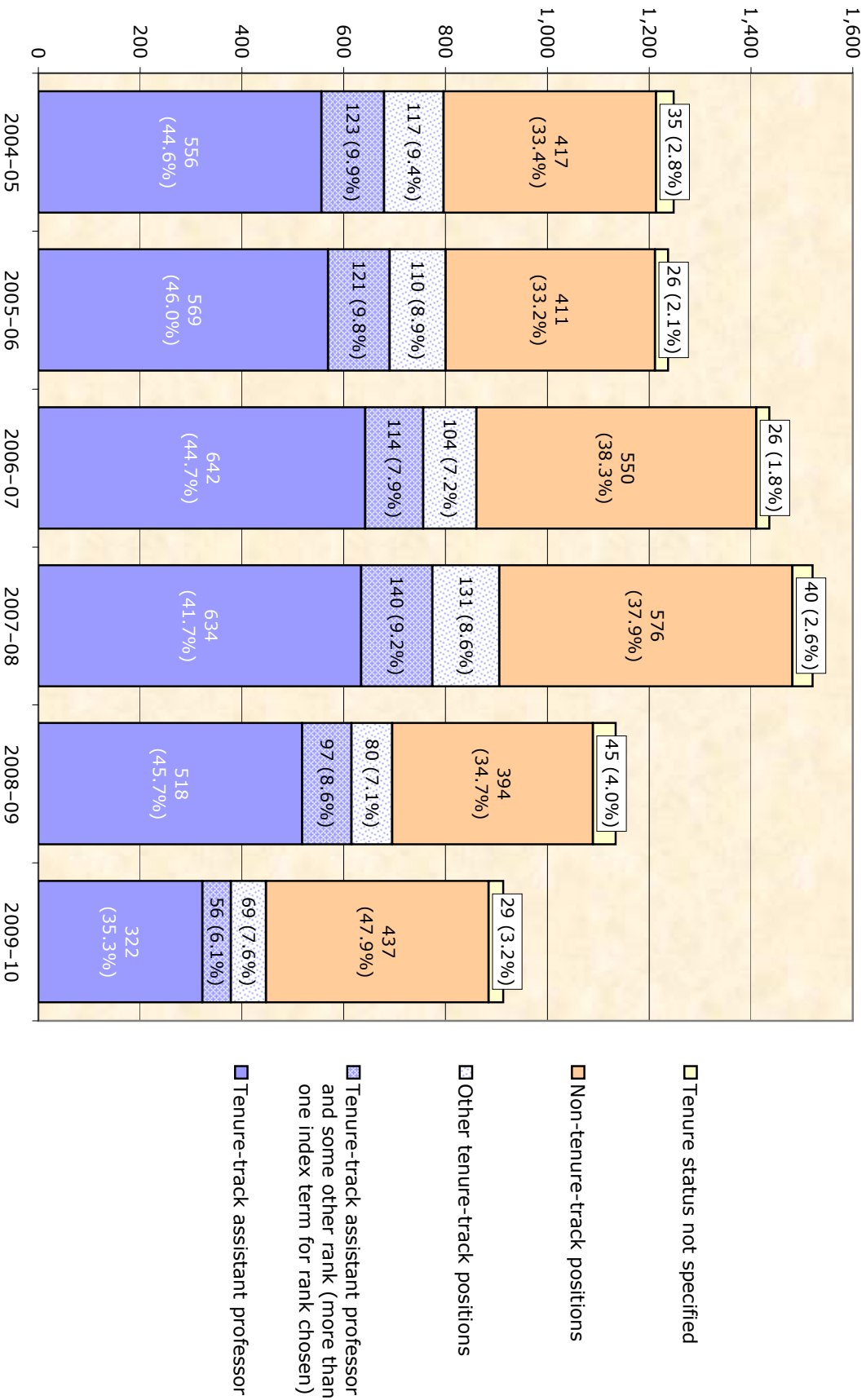


Table 1. Number and Percentage of Ads in the English JIL Indexed for Various Ranks, 2000-01 to 2009-10

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

Table 2. Number and Percentage of Ads in the Foreign Language JIL Indexed for Various Ranks, 2000-01 to 2009-10

Type of Position	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Assistant professor	791	739	765	667	689	686	791	779	635	452
	57.4%	59.0%	60.9%	56.7%	55.2%	55.5%	55.1%	51.2%	56.0%	49.5%
Instructor or assistant professor	93	71	54	75	72	69	65	69	52	46
	6.7%	5.7%	4.3%	6.4%	5.8%	5.6%	4.5%	4.5%	4.6%	5.0%
Assistant professor or associate professor	65	62	76	65	76	61	73	86	64	36
	4.7%	4.9%	6.1%	5.5%	6.1%	4.9%	5.1%	5.7%	5.6%	3.9%
Assistant professor, associate professor, or professor	42	47	34	30	42	49	42	58	36	26
	3.0%	3.8%	2.7%	2.6%	3.4%	4.0%	2.9%	3.8%	3.2%	2.8%
Other combinations including assistant professor	17	8	10	7	8	9	12	17	8	8
	1.2%	0.6%	0.8%	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	0.8%	1.1%	0.7%	0.9%
Instructor	201	183	171	192	210	219	301	320	194	220
	14.6%	14.6%	13.6%	16.3%	16.8%	17.7%	21.0%	21.0%	17.1%	24.1%
Associate professor	20	11	8	11	15	17	14	24	16	13
	1.5%	0.9%	0.6%	0.9%	1.2%	1.4%	1.0%	1.6%	1.4%	1.4%
Associate professor or professor	49	45	50	48	56	50	49	43	34	26
	3.6%	3.6%	4.0%	4.1%	4.5%	4.0%	3.4%	2.8%	3.0%	2.8%
Professor	33	31	27	26	29	34	29	43	26	26
	2.4%	2.5%	2.1%	2.2%	2.3%	2.7%	2.0%	2.8%	2.3%	2.8%
Other combinations not including assistant professor				1			1	2	2	3
	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%
Rank not specified or not relevant	68	56	61	54	51	43	59	80	67	57
	4.9%	4.5%	4.9%	4.6%	4.1%	3.5%	4.1%	5.3%	5.9%	6.2%
Total	1,379	1,253	1,256	1,176	1,248	1,237	1,436	1,521	1,134	913
	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 *JL*, 2000–01 to 2009–10, 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
Composition and rhetoric	30.8	32.0	29.0	29.4	32.3	29.6	29.1	32.1	30.7	33.0
Technical and business writing	11.5	10.0	9.9	8.5	10.4	9.9	8.2	8.2	7.6	10.3
Creative writing	14.2	15.4	12.6	12.7	12.7	13.6	14.6	14.9	12.0	10.1
British literature	30.8	29.5	28.6	28.0	24.2	24.6	28.2	28.7	30.2	30.3
American literature	27.0	23.7	24.0	24.4	20.8	21.0	24.0	22.1	23.0	24.9
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
African American literature	12.6	10.4	10.9	10.9	8.8	9.4	10.3	8.0	8.6	7.4
Other minority literatures	14.2	11.8	12.3	11.7	8.2	9.9	11.2	7.7	9.0	7.1
Postcolonial literature	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.8	8.2	8.8	6.6	9.4	8.0
World literature	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.4	8.8	9.9	7.4	9.3	9.4
Comparative literature	13.8	14.9	18.0	17.2	11.6	12.8	14.1	15.6	16.4	19.0
Generalist	15.4	13.7	11.4	12.5	12.2	11.8	10.9	14.1	9.9	13.2
Criticism, theory					6.3	5.7	6.7	6.9	7.3	7.6
Cultural studies					9.9	12.0	11.1	11.8	12.1	10.6
Film					4.9	6.4	6.7	6.5	6.8	7.8
Technology and digital media				7.7	6.5	8.5	9.8	10.6	9.0	11.1
Interdisciplinary					10.4	11.0	10.5	10.9	10.4	10.8
English education	7.9	8.7	7.6	7.4	6.7	6.3	7.4	7.8	9.2	9.3
Linguistics and ESL	11.0	11.5	10.8	9.8	12.3	11.1	9.1	13.4	12.3	12.6
Other fields of specialization	16.6	20.0	23.7	24.2	6.0	14.7	19.8	21.4	22.2	25.3
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
Nonacademic	1.8	1.6	1.2	1.0	1.3	0.6	1.4	1.4	0.2	1.6
Spanish	1.8	2.3	2.0	1.3	1.8	1.1	1.4	2.1	2.5	3.6
Latin America	1.0	1.4	1.7	1.3	0.9	0.7	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.6
Portuguese	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.2
French	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.1	0.7	0.7	1.8	2.4	3.3
Francophone studies	0.3	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.7
Italian	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.5	1.0
German and Scandinavian	0.7	1.2	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.7	1.0	1.6	2.0	3.0
Russian and Slavic	0.1	1.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.7	1.7
Arabic	0.1	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.6	1.0	0.8	0.8	1.1
Hebrew	0.2	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.7
Classical	0.3	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.5	1.0
Chinese	0.3	0.9	0.9	0.5	0.3	0.7	1.0	0.4	0.7	1.5
Japanese	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.6
Other languages	1.2	1.2	0.9	2.0	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.2	1.6	2.6
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

Notes

Departments may use multiple index terms to classify their ads; therefore the number of ads indexed for various field specialties adds up to a total greater than the number of ads published. 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 *JL*, 2000–01 to 2009–10, 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
Spanish	48.4	49.7	45.8	45.7	46.6	45.4	42.8	43.7	42.9	43.0
Latin America	13.4	13.2	13.5	12.5	13.9	12.9	11.6	11.8	12.2	13.3
Portuguese	2.0	3.2	2.5	3.1	2.9	2.7	3.3	3.2	3.0	2.2
French	18.8	17.7	17.8	16.3	19.6	16.8	17.8	16.5	16.8	18.6
Franophone studies	3.8	3.9	4.5	4.0	5.0	4.0	5.2	4.8	5.7	5.5
Italian	7.3	5.8	6.7	6.5	7.1	5.8	7.4	6.6	7.0	5.9
German and Scandinavian	11.4	12.7	9.6	11.7	11.0	11.0	10.9	11.8	11.6	11.6
Russian and Slavic	3.3	4.7	4.1	3.7	3.0	3.8	2.1	2.4	4.4	4.6
Arabic	1.2	1.7	1.9	2.6	3.3	4.6	5.0	3.9	5.3	5.5
Chinese	2.9	4.3	4.7	2.6	2.6	4.3	7.5	6.0	7.1	8.3
Japanese	3.0	3.9	3.0	2.6	3.2	4.0	3.8	2.6	3.1	4.1
Hebrew	1.0	1.4	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.6
Classical	1.3	1.5	2.0	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.6	1.1	1.1	1.8
Other languages	3.3	4.4	3.6	4.7	4.2	5.7	4.8	4.9	5.8	7.0
Linguistics and ESL	16.5	16.4	16.0	13.4	17.4	15.8	12.3	15.4	14.0	13.9
Comparative literature	13.7	15.2	19.7	18.4	12.4	15.8	13.4	16.5	16.9	17.1
World literature					2.6	3.2	3.3	2.9	3.5	3.2
Cultural studies					6.0	5.5	4.4	5.9	5.6	5.9
Postcolonial literature					1.2	1.5	1.5	1.6	2.2	2.5
Criticism, theory					2.8	1.8	1.8	2.7	3.5	3.6
Film					1.7	1.6	1.5	3.2	2.8	3.1
Technology and digital media					4.6	4.4	4.9	5.7	4.1	4.4
Interdisciplinary					5.4	4.9	5.6	6.3	5.8	6.4
Generalist	19.9	20.6	18.2	13.1	11.1	10.9	7.1	6.0	6.5	6.0
Department chair	3.3	3.6	4.0	5.2	4.6	5.2	7.5	7.6	7.0	6.2
Other administrative	2.2	2.1	1.1	2.6	5.8	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
American literature	2.6	3.5	3.1	2.6	2.6	1.9	2.0	2.5	4.1	4.8
African American literature	2.4	1.1	2.4	1.8	1.4	1.0	0.8	1.0	1.6	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
British literature	2.0	2.8	2.0	1.8	2.2	1.5	1.3	2.6	3.9	4.8
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
Composition and rhetoric	1.3	1.0	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.7	1.1	0.6	1.1
Technical and business writing	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2
Creative writing	0.6	1.3	0.8	1.0	0.3	0.3	0.7	0.4	0.4	1.0
English education	1.0	1.0	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.5	0.8	0.9	1.0	0.8
Other fields of specialization	11.4	16.2	18.8	20.6	8.6	14.9	17.9	18.9	19.0	21.6
Nonacademic	2.2	2.1	1.5	1.3	1.1	0.8	1.2	1.1	0.3	1.3
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

Notes

Departments may use multiple index terms to classify their ads; therefore the number of ads indexed for various field specialties adds up to a total greater than the number of ads published. 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.