

Editorial

A year ago, we announced the implementation of our totally web-based system for manuscript submission and peer review. We had beta-tested the system, but there was still some trepidation in the Publications Office about abandoning our tried-and-true procedures for a plunge into the ether. Today, those fears seem quaint. The new system has outperformed even our most optimistic expectations and has contributed significantly to our continued goal of publishing the best papers in ecological science in the most timely manner. On average, the papers in the present issue were received in their final form six months prior to the issue date; 15 of the 27 papers in the issue are appearing in print (and online) less than a year after they were submitted. Reports, which are fast-tracked, are appearing, on average, nine months after submission.

The push to make our published papers more concise has also played a crucial role in decreasing the time to publication. Judicious use of *Ecological Archives* for methodological detail, complete data sets, and full statistical analyses has helped authors stay within the new length limits for submissions. More than half of the papers in this issue have associated appendices or supplements posted in *Ecological Archives*. This has allowed our journal to keep pace with the increased submission rate (1239 new manuscripts submitted to *Ecology/Ecological Monographs* during 2004). Concise submissions proceed more rapidly toward publication at every step. When papers are more concise, we can publish more of them in a timely manner. Our success with more concise published papers has aided us in keeping institutional subscription rates far below those of competing for-profit journals. We have had no increases whatsoever in individual subscription rates over the past several years.

Year after year, *Ecology* has been ranked among the top journals publishing ecological science in terms of the ISI impact factors published in the annual *Journal Citation Report*. This, in conjunction with the annual increases in the rate of submissions and our level of selectivity (acceptance rates between 25% and 30%), indicates that *Ecology* remains the premier journal for the field. We thank our authors for continuing to send us their very best papers, and we are grateful to our Editorial Board and reviewers for their efforts to keep our standards high.

We do not intend to rest on our laurels. Effective with this issue, authors now access PDF proofs via an ftp site, which especially benefits our overseas authors. We are happy to announce that, beginning with articles published in 2005, we will provide authors with complimentary PDF files of their published articles. During the coming year we expect to add new functionality to the online journals, including enhanced cross-linking of references to published articles (not only to articles in ESA's family of journals, but also to ecological research in many other journals) and a forward-linking feature that will link published articles in ESA journals to papers that subsequently cite those articles. ESA journal abstracts will be accessible via Google searches and the extensive CrossRef database. We are also redesigning the online journals web page to give it a new look and make it more user-friendly.

Finally, we are proud to announce ESA's participation in the Society Summit for Data Sharing (for a full report of the meeting, see pp. 61–64 of the January 2005 issue of the *Bulletin of Ecological Society of America*, available online at esapubs.org/esapubs/bulletin/backissues/backissues.htm). We fully support the statement that “Our vision as members of the scientific community is to promote the advancement of science through the process documenting, archiving, and making available the research information and supporting data of published studies.” As a first step, we have adopted the following editorial policy: “The editors and publisher of this journal expect authors to make the data underlying published articles available.” This statement will now be included in every issue of *Ecology*. As data registries and archives become more readily available, we will expect authors to register data and deposit metadata connecting published papers to the archived data underlying the results. These steps continue ESA's journals on a path charted by the leaders of the Publications Committee, the Future of Long-term Ecological Data (FLED) Committee of the 1990s, and the Ecological Visions Committee in advocating and taking responsibility for wide and easy accessibility of ecological data.

—DONALD R. STRONG
—J. DAVID BALDWIN