

AJB Editorial Board meeting 5/14/2024

Welcome and introductions—everyone on the call briefly introduced themselves.

Pam introduced new AEs from last fall's Open Call for Editors and acknowledged those who retired over the past year.

Pam noted this was her last AJB editorial board meeting and extended her thanks to everyone for their contributions to the journal.

There have been notable challenges over the past several years: transition from self-publishing to publishing with Wiley; COVID—we seem to have come through the other end; the continuing transition to OA; the competition from predatory journals; among other things.

Some of Pam's goals as EiC were to

- increase the diversity of the editorial board, reviewers, and authors;
- increase inclusivity, through open calls—for editors and special issues;
- increase the involvement of early career scientists (ECAB);
- increase readership;
- initiate new features to the journal, i.e., OTNOT essays, highlights;
- establish *AJB* Reviews.

Open Call:

- Last fall AJB and APPS held an Open Call for AEs (83 applications from over 20 countries).
- AJB invited 13, and APPS invited 9 people to serve as Associate Editors.
- AJB now has 64 AEs on the editorial board; 47% are from countries other than the US.

Open Access:

- Over the past several years, an increasing push has been toward an open access model for scientific journals.
- This model shifts the cost of publishing to the author, which disenfranchises many.
- Wiley has been negotiating deals (up to 80+) with institutions where the authors' APC is covered: <https://bit.ly/3Vkv7lf>
- Amy checks whether a deal is available when a manuscript is submitted and sends a note to the author.

Artificial Intelligence and ChatGPT:

- A BSA ad hoc committee on AI, chaired by Theresa Culley, developed guidelines for authors, reviewers, and software.
- These are now on the journal website: <https://bit.ly/45jfaqs>
- Sean and Heidi expressed concern that authors/reviewers won't follow these.
- We'll all have to be vigilant; guidelines will be changed in the future as needed.

Early Career Advisory Board:

- Pam introduced Emily Sessa [who was unable to attend the meeting] as BSA Director-at-Large for Publications and head of the Early Career Advisory Board.
- We recognize the importance of having the perspective and new ideas of early-career researchers.
- Comments from Emily: Discussion of AI with ECAB; two ECABers are working on a climate change virtual issue.

Discussion of Article Diversity:

- Pam stressed the diversity of types of articles that we publish.
- We welcome and encourage AE suggestions for topics.

AJB Reviews

- Kasey Barton is our Reviews Editor [also unable to attend the meeting].
- We're looking for synthetic reviews; these should be of interest to a broad audience.
- We're happy to get input from the board. [See the slide showing the diversity of topics of Reviews published.]
- The highest cited MS so far is a review of hyper-parasitism in plants.
- Reviews are collected under a tab on the AJB homepage: <https://bit.ly/45nqd1F>.

Synthesis Papers and Prize:

- This effort is headed by Sean Graham.
- The focus is on early-career researchers. [See Sean's slide on the authors chosen for this year to write a synthesis paper; one was selected by a separate committee to win the prize.]
- We had fewer applicants in 2023 (10) than the previous year.
- Sean asked the board to encourage early career researchers to apply for next year.
- Questions: Is the \$2000 prize enough? How do we increase diversity?
- Discussion:
 - Question from Aaron David: Is the requirement that these be single-author papers seen as a positive or negative? Could it discourage authors from submitting because they can't share the work?
 - Sean: Could be interesting to get feedback from New Phytologist on their award.
 - Question from Heidrun Huber: Would it be possible to block the identity of the author from the initial selection committee?
 - Question from John Freudenstein: What is the main mechanism for broadcasting the call? Can this be broadened?
 - Amy: We advertise via BSA email and social media. We've seen a general decline in people signing up for things.
 - Sean: Overall the quality of the papers is really high. The applicant pool this year had increased international diversity (fewer applicants from the US).
 - Thais Vasconcelos: New Phytol doesn't require a reference letter. Would removing this requirement increase the number of applicants?

- Amy: Reference letters are only required for people who pass the first hurdle, prior to being invited to submit a paper.
- John F.: Thinks that single-author papers are preferable. It highlights that it's all their work.
- Thais: Regarding the reference letter: the fewer barriers you present, the more applicants you'll have.
- Heidrun: Reference letters are known to be biased and often applicants are asked to write their own letters.
- Carol Goodwillie: Question on whether the synthesis papers are well cited. (Answer: too soon to have good answer.)
- Carol G: also noted that the recommendation letters don't provide much essential info, so maybe this could be dropped.
- Overall approval of prize amount, but question whether all submitting authors could receive a small cash prize.
- Synthesis papers are collected on a tab on the AJB homepage: <https://bit.ly/4aXKUTk>.

Highlights:

- AEs are encouraged to suggest papers they're handling that should be highlighted
- They're collected here: <https://bit.ly/3RmsYKW>.

On The Nature Of Things Essays:

- Pam is always eager for suggestions for topics and authors.
- They're collected here: <https://bit.ly/3Vj6SKw>.

Impact Factor:

- The new Impact Factors won't be released until late June 2024.
- Discussion of IF and a look at what's being cited [see slides].
- AJB is a Society journal, and we want to make sure that the journal represents our constituency and is not driven solely by IF considerations.
- Pam had a slide looking at the number of citable items in 2021-2022 and the number of citations.
- Statistics show slightly decreased citation numbers for this year's IF.
- Noted that AJB publications continue to garner citations outside of the IF window.
- Question from Kathleen Kay: Are there commonalities among papers not getting citations that the AEs could pay attention to?
- Pam: Not that I can see. This kind of info could be interesting but also dangerous because some papers might not be cited in the short term but could be cited highly over the long term.
- See the slide showing the number of papers submitted in different categories over the past several years.
- Quick review of some of our most highly cited articles. Special issue articles are well-cited overall, so these benefit the journal.

Turnaround Times:

- We aim to improve the turnaround time for the review process.
- Data from the Wiley report looking at these numbers: The time to first decision has improved post-COVID, but not when you look only at papers that weren't RWR'ed.

Overview Reports:

- Pam asked for feedback on the EM overview email of AE assignments that Amy has started sending out.
- Overall positive response from AEs on these emails.
 - Aaron: Question about inviting new reviewers that have to be registered: It feels like there are a lot of steps. Is the email informing people they've been registered necessary?
 - Amy: This is a GDPR (privacy regulations) requirement in EM.
 - Ann Willyard: Would it be helpful to shorten the default window to accept review invitations?
 - Amy: Could consider shortening it from 14 days to 7 or 10 days.

Should a MS be Sent for Review:

- What are AEs looking at when deciding whether a MS should be sent for review?
- Anna: Are the science and experimental design sound?
- Sean: AJB, as a Society journal, will publish papers that might not be considered in higher-ranked journals. We're aware that this could hold us back, but not sure that we should be cherry-picking for our IF.
- Pam: Just because we send a MS to you doesn't mean it should necessarily be sent for review. We rely on AE expertise to determine this.
- Brandon Pratt: I'm also looking for sound science.
- Kathleen Kay: AEs could help push authors to make adjustments to make papers more accessible; e.g., sometimes the title doesn't express the breadth of the paper, suggestions to reframe the study to broaden appeal.
- Pam: AEs can play an important role in this, especially for first-time authors/early career authors.
- Aaron: Stressed the importance of framing ecology papers in broader (not strictly plant) terms to increase appeal.
- Sean: Shout out for why he likes publishing in AJB. Importance of Society journal, professional quality of publication.
- Susan Kephart: There's also the possibility of improving the quality of a MS before it is sent for review (e.g., English).
- Anna: Abstracts aren't always very helpful. Could we help authors write a concise summary? (Amy: plain language summaries?)
- Pam: possibly ECAB could help with this.
- Sean: Survey on author experience. He ignores the ones from the publishers.

Attendees: Pam Diggle, Amy McPherson, Rich Hund, Ann Willyard, Gar Rothwell, John Freudenstein, Paul Kenrick, Myong Gi Chung, Juan Carlos Villareal, Lucia DeSoto, Eugenio Larios, Mario Blanco-Sanchez, Carole Gee, Andrew Schnabel, Johan Dahlgren, Rosie Trice, Joe Williams, Bruce Tiffney, Elena Peredo, Elizabeth Stacy, Anne-Laure Decombeix, Carol Goodwillie, Brandon Pratt, Andres Cortes, Jurg Schonenberger, David Carr, Brenda Grewell, Sean Graham, Kathleen Kay, Sandy-Lynn Steenhuisen, Anna Bucharova, Aaron David, Susan Kephart, Thais Vasconcelos, Mike Barker, Ignacio Escapa, Heidrun Huber, Erin Irish, Staci Nole-Wilson, Beth Parada [might have missed people who joined late]