

Editorial

This past year saw Ralph Harbach pass on the editorship of *Systematic Entomology* to two new, joint editors. Frank Krell from The Natural History Museum, London, became the new U.K. editor, responsible for all beetle papers and papers submitted from Europe and Asia. Pete Cranston, previously from The Natural History Museum, then from the CSIRO, Canberra, Australia, and now at the University of California in Davis, took responsibility for all dipteran papers and those submitted from the rest of the world. Ralph improved the reputation of the journal and strengthened its position as the world's top systematic entomology journal. This was a hard act to follow and we have made relatively few changes in what has been (we hope) a smooth transition.

In 2003, we published twenty-six papers, with those handled exclusively by the new editorial team appearing in issue 4. One CD-ROM review and four book reviews were published. The average paper length last year was twenty-one pages, but included one 'over-limit' paper comprising a fifty-eight page phylogenetic analysis of Odonata.

At the end of December, fifty-eight papers had been accepted into the refereeing system during 2003, twenty were returned to authors without submission to refereeing. We have twelve papers accepted and allocated to the next two issues, and sixteen out with referees. Papers published in the final issue of 2003 had an average of 25 weeks (longest 42 weeks, shortest 20 weeks) from acceptance to publication, which is probably the minimum feasible processing time. We published two papers on 'non-Insecta': one on bothriurid scorpions, the other on megistocephalid Chilopoda.

Our referees have been commendably diligent and timely in their reviews. Valuable additions to the editorial board, plus electronic communication, undoubtedly has hastened the processing, as has pre-filtering of unacceptable or unsuitable submissions.

The vagaries and frequent non-delivery of post-11 September 2001 mail to and from the U.S.A. has forced an overdue review of journal communication and postponed the publication of at least one paper. Electronic submissions are strongly encouraged, as are such communications with Blackwell Publishing and referees: only four referees of 107 in total requested paper for review. Proofs are sent as emailed PDFs, or if too large are couriered and/or increasingly placed on a Blackwell FTP site for download.

Papers published in 2003 showed two pleasing trends (in addition to their content): diversity of locations of senior

authors and increase in international collaborations. These welcome trends continue in 2004, notably with a range of submissions from South America and Japan. The countries of residence of senior authors in 2003 were as follows: USA 6; UK 5; Italy 3; Canada 2; Finland 2; France 2; and one each for Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, the Netherlands, Germany and Spain.

Sixty per cent of papers had multinational authorship, with countries of residence of additional authors being Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Greece, Iran, Paraguay, Mexico, Romania and Switzerland. The lists obscure the relocation of many peripatetic systematists, who are working and publishing from laboratories in other than their 'home' countries – a pattern that extends to both editors of *Systematic Entomology*. The PEET (NSF – Partnerships for Enhancing Expertise in Taxonomy) grant system in the U.S.A. is encouraging internationalism and feeding high quality systematic work to our journal. European funding initiatives would have a similar impact.

Lengthy submissions remain an issue of debate: thorough taxonomic monography is important, as are profuse and useful illustrations, but lengthy papers mean fewer can be published. We published one 'over-limit' paper during 2003 mentioned above, appreciably shortened from its first submission. However, no text or figures were placed in 'Supplementary Material', a strategy that we now encourage authors to consider for location of 'non-core' data (additional phylogenetic trees, extensive distributional information, and data matrices, etc.). Supplementary Material appears only on Synergy, with details of the material that is available appearing in the printed journal. Furthermore, we encourage authors to consider including all their data matrices as Nexus files as electronic supplements, as well as comprehensive material lists. This second issue of 2004 will test how well this new approach functions. The same issue also will have our first Opinion and Reply on a topical issue. We encourage these submissions and will treat them as rapid communications, but they remain subject to peer review (indeed we have rejected one, and sent another back for extensive revision). Finally, we also aim to make the book reviews a more interesting and stimulating part of the journal and we encourage unsolicited submissions.

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