

Editorial

With both editors of this journal now located in the western United States, but retaining our existing geographic and taxonomic responsibility for allocations of papers, it is valid to ask how we relate to the Royal Entomological Society of London. We remain members overseas of course, with one of us longer out of the UK than the other, and we have enhanced appreciation of the global perspective of the society. We meet with Blackwell personnel more often at international meetings than in the UK, and our advisory panel reflects a geographic diversity. The once-tight linkage between the Natural History Museum and RES in Queen's Gate has weakened, yet we retain advisory panelists from the Museum, and in due course hope that an editor of the journal may again be based in the erstwhile 'home' of taxonomic entomology. Meanwhile, we need only look at the addresses of those who submit papers to *Systematic Entomology* to see that in the past year only one comes from our previous abode!

This year has been one of consolidation, lifting our position as the premier journal in the field – with our ISI ranking having risen from 6th to 4th in Entomology for 2006. The all-important Impact Factor rose substantially (to above 2.5) bringing with it many more high quality submissions from the USA, and especially Australia where such Thatcherite metrics have become career pre-requisites. In a previous editorial (Cranston & Krell 2007) we have expressed our doubts about such metrics but, of course, when they go in our direction we can bask in some reflected warmth. In 2007 we received slightly fewer manuscript submissions (about 90), but we maintained our strategy of 'culling' submissions that ought not to trouble formal reviewers. We continued the practice of using our advisory panelists for early advice when we as editors we feel less than authoritative. This is a valued support role that eases our function by (largely) sustaining our perhaps ambivalent first impressions of certain manuscripts.

The summary statistics this year show more short papers, a high acceptance rate amongst those forwarded to referees, and greater allocation of data to supplementary materials (despite residual suspicions about longevity). Time to e-availability has suffered from vagaries of copy editing, but time to paper publication has shortened appreciably as a balance between pages allocated to the journal and accepted papers nears equilibrium. In detail: we entered 60

papers in 2007 into review, and published a record 39 papers in the 4 issues (720 pages) in the year. Published paper length averaged much shorter than previously at 18 pages, with a maximum of 41 pages: we have not discriminated against longer papers, but decided informally that each editor will be allowed to accept one per annum (recognising that each would equate to 3 'average-lengthed' submissions!). Support statistics for trends in location of first authors are weak, but continue to show dominance of the United States, although we are conscious that many US-based authors are doctoral and post-doctoral researchers from elsewhere. Equally, we note that many authors located elsewhere include exiles from the USA, and those who received their systematics training in the USA but are now returned to permanent positions at home, or to third countries. Whatever, our first authors were located in the USA (11), Australia (4), Germany (4), China (3), Spain (3), France (2), Czech Republic (2) and one from each of Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Japan, Slovenia, Switzerland and Taiwan. Coauthors' nationalities included many of the above, plus Italy, South Africa, Sweden, UK and (French) Réunion. Our enterprise remains global, although submissions from UK continue to be depressed.

Previously we have noted the importance of the US National Science Foundation's PEET (Partnerships for Enhancing Expertise in Taxonomy) initiative in training of the next generation. In this issue we publish two outcomes from one of the several PEET entomological initiatives (scale insects). We present also an opinion piece from Quentin Wheeler concerning the decline in innovative morphological studies accompanying the plethora of 'morphology-free' molecular studies. We invite any interested reader to enter the debate with support or a rebuttal, preferably accompanied by a suite of new positions for morphological systematists.

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Reference

Cranston, P.S. & Krell F.-T. (2007). Editorial. *Systematic Entomology* **32**, 1.