

Editorial

The world of scientific publication is fast changing, and the Royal Entomological Society journals, and our own *Systematic Entomology*, are not immune. Changes to our journal made in the past 2 years, including OnlineEarly publication of accepted articles, provide a more timely review and publication process, with easier dissemination of results via electronic (pdf and html) documents. Nonetheless, this is not the end of the transformation of scholarly publication, with, *inter alia*, issues of pay-for-access, library subscriptions for journal and society membership subsidy all providing potential instability. One co-editor (Pete Cranston) spent some months in 2005–6 on sabbatical in South Africa, in a well-established university with an international reputation in entomology. Unexpected was the loss of familiar ease of access to journals, including this one. Just how difficult is it to function in a less-developed research environment – notably in the very countries where insect diversity and taxonomic/identification problems are greatest? As editors we will continue to support Blackwell's efforts (such as AGORA) to make the journal contents available widely and freely to all users.

As in previous years, submitted manuscripts substantially exceeded our ability to publish them all. In 2005, 74 manuscripts were entered into the formal refereeing procedures, another substantial increase. As we can publish only some 25–28 articles per year, we must decline two in three to maintain balance and a timely publication rate. Even with OnlineEarly electronic publication, we remain constrained by the requirement for publication on paper without excessive delay.

Not included above are some 30 or so manuscripts discussed with authors or submitted but not entered into formal review. We encourage authors to discuss with us the suitability of their proposed submissions, particularly if these are lengthy. In the past year we have published several papers of over 40 pages, but recognize that for every long manuscript published, others, perhaps more concise, must be sacrificed. Although the increase in pages granted us by the Royal Entomological Society is welcome, we encourage from the outset allocation of 'non-core' data to the 'Supplementary Materials' made available as a secure archive by Blackwell Publishing.

We recognize the problems with volatile (ie non-retrievable) archival data (Wren, 2004; Evangelou *et al.*, 2005) and wish to explain what has happened to our journal. Blackwell moved supplements to a secure archive at their Synergy site where the electronic versions of the articles already are archived, but this came at a price: Electronic supplemental data were given a new URL, no longer open-access but available only via the electronic version of the

journal. As editors, we welcome the secure archiving of all electronic material together with the article, but question access conditions. Because of this change in accessibility, we ask authors to consider maintaining supplementary information on their own web site (cited in text) even if including potential supplementary material in the manuscript for maintenance in the Synergy archive.

In keeping with our intent to publish as much entomological systematics as possible, we have decided to cease accepting papers on other invertebrates as from the start of 2006. Although we have published few such papers, submissions increase and we are (a) aware of alternative specialist journals, (b) less cognizant of the quality and of suitable reviewers, and (c) require the pages for insect (including 'Parainsecta') papers. We trust that the inclusion in Volume 30 of one editorial, two opinion pieces, and an increased number of six book and software reviews (as well as the 27 original articles) is not seen as contradictory. Article download statistics from the journal site shows that the peripherals are rather popular, and we encourage feedback ('opinions') on topical issues in our science.

Sadly we regret the passing of another entomological systematist at a far too young age. The news of the death of James (Steve) Ashe as 2005 drew to a close, came in a year that opened with our publication of his excellent study of the tachyporine staphylinids (Ashe, 2005). Professor Ashe headed Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and was Curator-in-Charge of the Division of Entomology of the University of Kansas Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Research Center. His loss to entomology teaching and research, to coleopterology and the study of those exceedingly difficult aleocharines is immense and we mourn his passing.

PETER S. CRANSTON
FRANK-T. KRELL

References

- Ashe, J.S. (2005) Phylogeny of the tachyporine group subfamilies and 'basal' lineages of the Aleocharinae (Coleoptera: Staphylinidae) based on larval and adult characteristics. *Systematic Entomology*, **30**, 3–37. 10.1111/j.1365-3113.2004.00258.x.
- Evangelou, E., Trikalinos, T.A. & Ioannidis, J.P.A. (2005) Unavailability of online supplementary scientific information from articles published in major journals. *FASEB Journal*, **19**, 1943–1944.
- Wren, J.D. (2004) 404 not found: the stability and persistence of URLs published in MEDLINE. *Bioinformatics*, **20**, 668–672.