

Letter from the Editor

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Marine Biology was founded by Otto Kinne in 1967 and thanks to his efforts, it became one of the world's leading journals in the field over the following years. In 2007, after 40 years as Editor-in-Chief, Otto Kinne stepped down and I took on responsibility for the journal. Fortunately, it was possible to maintain and even increase the success of *Marine Biology*. With a Journal Impact Factor of 2.47, *Marine Biology* is now ranked eighteenth out of 100 periodicals in the field of Marine and Freshwater Biology (JCR by Thomson Reuters, Accessed February 2014).

Changes in topics and directions in marine science and, more importantly, changes in publication behavior have required some modifications of editorial policy since 2007. The new era for *Marine Biology* is reflected in the new cover introduced around that time.

In the early years of *Marine Biology*, the lives of marine scientists were not yet dictated by the number of publications per year, by impact factors and citation indices. The authors could follow their interests intensively and with more patience than today, and thus, large datasets could be created. Long-term studies on seasonal distributions and zonation of species and communities were conducted in all parts of the world's oceans. Dissemination of this knowledge was certainly enhanced by the possibility of publishing it in a journal like *Marine Biology*, and of particular help was the guidance of regional editors from different countries who were responsible for manuscripts from their regions.

With the linking-up scientists from all over the world by the internet, the availability of electronic submission, and

an increase in scientific specialization, the inherited system of regional editors was no longer optimal for adequate handling of manuscripts. As new fields emerged, novel topics were discussed and new methods used, the responsibility of editorial board members was changed from a regional, geographic focus to a subject-oriented focus. This also facilitates the search for suitable reviewers, as the associate editors can find them within their own scientific community. This further ensures that manuscripts from all parts of the world have the same scientific quality.

The former regional editors now receive manuscripts within their field of expertise; they are now associate editors. In order to cover all important subject areas in marine biology, the number of editors was increased, from 16 in 2006 to 36 in 2013. The journal continues to welcome new editors and also accepts applications from professionals. The higher number of editors reduces the work load for each of them and this ensures fast processing of the manuscripts. This is a matter of primary concern for all authors and thus, besides ensuring high scientific quality of the publications, this is our most important goal.

Manuscripts are pre-reviewed immediately after submission. If they cannot be considered for publication, the authors are usually informed within 3 days. This allows rapid submission to a more appropriate journal. Editors work hard to expedite the reviewing process, aiming to achieve a "Time to First Decision" of 4 weeks. Manuscripts finally accepted in *Marine Biology* are published online on SpringerLink approximately 16 days after acceptance. Electronic supplements containing text, data tables, illustrations, photos or videos can be linked with the article and provide a great opportunity to present extensive additional information to readers.

Since *Marine Biology* accepts manuscripts from all fields of "Life in Oceans and Coastal waters," the focus

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is on papers of high importance and originality that contribute to an ongoing scientific debate or advance growing research areas. A highlight in this respect was the Special Issue “Acidification” which was published in August 2013. Already, many papers in this issue are frequently cited.

Due to the increasing number of submissions, the editors have to be selective. Therefore, it is important that authors clearly indicate the new aspects of their work and how they contribute to an ongoing scientific debate. Manuscripts which are narrow in scope, descriptive, local in relevance or repetitive of previous research cannot be considered for publication, even if the work is done carefully and no major problems are found in the manuscript. Submission of manuscripts representing “salami sliced work,” obviously generated because of high publication pressure, are not encouraged. In recent years, there have been about 700 submissions per year with an upward trend. About one-third of them were finally published in *Marine Biology*. Outstanding papers in all categories are selected as feature articles which are accompanied by a comment from the responsible editor.

As for any other journal, it is increasingly difficult to find qualified peer reviewers. Nevertheless, we are able to provide at least two expert reviews for every manuscript passing editorial pre-review. I am aware that the work load of reviewers is generally very high, and am really grateful to all of them. Without the selfless contribution of these experts, it would be impossible to maintain the high scientific standard of *Marine Biology*. Most reviewers do

provide their comments on time which enables us to make the first decision on many manuscripts in less than 4 weeks.

To cope with the challenge of the increasing importance of open access journals and manuscripts, *Marine Biology* offers an open access program called “Open Choice.” This allows authors to decide how their articles are published. Open access articles are freely available online and can be easily identified as open access in the article PDF and on SpringerLink. As a new feature, *Marine Biology* provides the option to transfer a submitted manuscript which is considered to be interesting for marine biologists, but not suitable for *Marine Biology*, to *Springer Plus*. *SpringerPlus* is an Open Access journal which publishes manuscripts in various disciplines of science. Submitted manuscripts can be transferred directly to *SpringerPlus*, without any reformatting. The option of direct transfer of manuscripts from *Marine Biology* to other journals will be extended in the future.

Marine Biology is ready for the challenges of the future, but the Journal’s performance will continue to depend on submission of good articles, careful and selfless work of reviewers and the high expertise of our editors. The Journal would not perform so well without the careful work of the all the people involved in its production. Together we will be able to increase the high scientific quality and the good reputation of *Marine Biology*.

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