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Using 50 years of published research to shape a journal's future



The Source

By: Penny Freedman, Mon Jun 14 2021

Serving as an editor takes dedication, time, and passion. Regardless of a journal's discipline focus, editors can learn from each other's successes. We asked some of our exceptional editors at Springer Nature to share initiatives that took their publications to new heights. Their stories of success highlight the impact that even a small change can have. Whatever the goal may be, big or small, be it growth, a major change-up, or a refinement of a process, we hope that the stories from our Exceptional Editor Case Study Series will help inspire new ways that editors can help advance their publications.



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The Inspiration

To mark the 50th anniversary of *Ambio* (https://www.springer.com/journal/13280?utm_source=the_source_blogs_null&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=AEXS_7_PF01_EditorCaseStudy50Y



ears), Bo Söderström, the Editor-in-Chief of the journal wanted to outline the future of the publication by showcasing how 50 years of published research contributed to solving some of society's most pressing environmental problems.



"Publication rates are exploding, more is written and there is less time for reflection and retrospection. Promoting old work is important when the number of journals trying to fit into approximately the same niche as Ambio is growing, and the many papers wanting to be published is putting pressure on the review system." - Bo Söderström



How It was done:

To kick things off, Sverker Sörlin, professor of environmental science and ideas, wrote a perspective (https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13280-020-01421-w?utm_source=the_source_blogs_null&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=AEXS_7_PF01_EditorCaseStudy50Years) explaining how Ambio co-

evolved with the emergence of environmental research, informing broader societal processes while also, in turn, being shaped by it.

To determine which influential papers to highlight, bibliometric analysis was used along with discussions with editors and an advisory board. From this process 10 anniversary themes and 57 papers were chosen.

Invitation letters were sent to corresponding authors of the selected articles, asking them to provide a personal reflection on the impact their article had from a professional and/or scientific viewpoint in the style of a “Behind the Paper.” For each of the themes, an Ambio editor provided background and historical context for the original articles in an Editorial. In addition, one or more currently active peers in each field reflected on the legacy of the articles today in a Perspective, outlining how the original articles helped reframe policy targets or new standards, what the current status of the research field is, and indicating some of the next challenges.

Marketing supported the initiative with three e-mail campaigns that included short [video messages](https://www.springer.com/journal/13280/updates/18623576?utm_source=the_source_blogs_null&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=AEXS_7_PFO1_EditorCaseStudy50Years) (https://www.springer.com/journal/13280/updates/18623576?utm_source=the_source_blogs_null&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=AEXS_7_PFO1_EditorCaseStudy50Years) from the editors, introducing each of the themes and a video from the Editor-in-Chief [discussing the anniversary](https://resource-cms.springernature.com/springer-cms/rest/v1/content/18640518/data/v2) (<https://resource-cms.springernature.com/springer-cms/rest/v1/content/18640518/data/v2>). Some of the author's reflections were also featured on the [Springer Nature Sustainability Community website](https://sustainabilitycommunity.springernature.com/channels/ambio-50th-anniversary) (<https://sustainabilitycommunity.springernature.com/channels/ambio-50th-anniversary>).

Challenges:

It was challenging to harmonize the articles in each theme. Some of the themes required several iterations before the content came together. By setting tight deadlines and sending friendly reminders, the journal received almost all contributions on time.

The Results:

The 57 published anniversary articles reflect the overall scope of the journal and have already been downloaded close to 50,000 times. The experience highlighted Ambio's impact, especially when published research led to changes in policy and practice.

Authors enjoyed reflecting on their articles and the impact it had on their research and careers. The comprehensive overview of past and ongoing environmental research across multiple disciplines, written by some of the topmost environmental researchers in the world, is in some ways a story of hope – even if much work is still to be done. The experiences gained from these anniversary articles serve as a springboard to how to further strengthen Ambio in the near future.



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