

I. Submissions and Decisions: 2012

Number of Submissions 2012: 249. This is an increase of 36 (17%) compared to 2011, and follows the 18% increase of 2011 over 2010. 249 is on par with the peak years of 2007-2009. The separate Editorial Office report shows 253 submissions, but that includes 4 book reviews not counted here.

All of the 249 submissions have received their initial or final decision. I rejected 65 (26%) without review, most as Not Appropriate. This is similar to the rate last year (28%). The manuscripts rejected under this category cover a very broad range - many are phylogenetic studies that are not of sufficiently general interest, but another large group is submissions that are simply in the wrong scientific discipline. The primary purpose of editorial rejection is to reduce the reviewing burden on the AEs, Editorial Board members, and outside reviewers, and I do not believe that their time would have been productively used on these manuscripts.

For the 184 manuscripts that underwent full review, I concurred with the AE recommendation 163 times (~89% of decisions). This percentage is similar to most recent years. I find that I still have some manuscripts for which the AE recommends Accept with Major Revision, but which I feel are more appropriate as Reject with Resubmission Encouraged. This is a continuation of the effort to more narrowly define the role of the Accept with Major Revision category. As you can see below, approximately 11% of manuscripts receive an Accept with major revision decision now, compared to the historical average of ~25%.

Of the 21 times I made a decision that differed from the AE's recommendation, my decision was always just one decision category different from the AE's recommendation. Compared to the AE recommendation, the final decision was less favorable for the author in 14 cases. In seven cases the AE recommended Accept/major, but my decision was Reject with resubmission encouraged, while there were two manuscripts that I accepted with major revisions even though the AE had recommended Reject/encourage. Most of the remaining changes from the AE recommendation involved papers that were accepted, where I simply adjusted whether we were telling the authors that the revisions were "major" or "minor". A few others were rejected manuscripts for which the AE checked box that indicates recommendation for the option of resubmission, but either the written comments communicated no discernible enthusiasm for seeing a new

version from the reviewers and AE or the manuscript had already been through two (or more) submissions and it seemed to me unlikely that another round would lead to a published paper.

2012 Decisions: (249)

Accept pending minor revisions: 37 (15%; 17% in 2011; 11% in 2010; 9% in 2009)

Accept pending major revisions: 28 (11%; 10% in 2011; 20% in 2010; 25% in 2009)

Reject, encourage/permit resubmission: 70 (28%; 25% in 2011; 24% in 2010; 29% in 2009)

Reject: 50 (20%; 19% in 2011; 20% in 2010; 20% in 2009)

Not Appropriate: 64 (26%; 28% in 2011; 24% in 2010; 17% in 2009)

Overall acceptance rate: 26% (27% in 2011; 31% in 2010; 34% in 2009)

Overall rejection rate: 74% (73% in 2011; 69% in 2010; 66% in 2009)

II. Manuscript Handling:

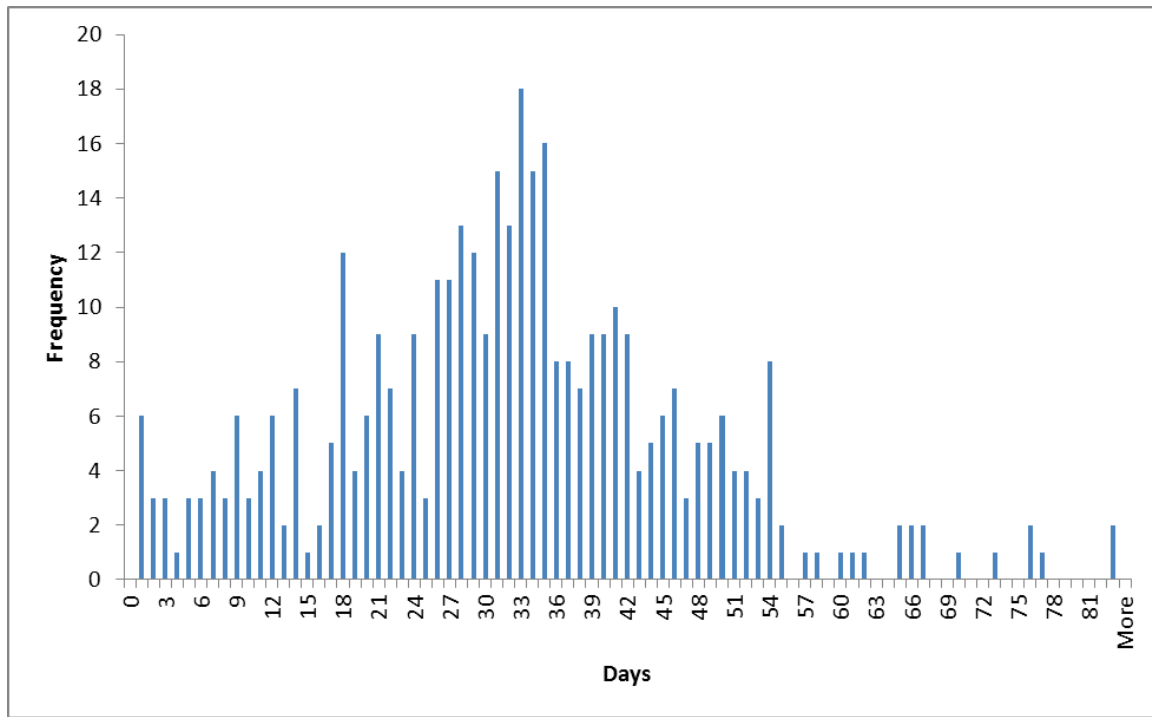
During 2012, we transitioned from having a Managing Editor who was an employee of SSB to use of the OUP Virtual Editorial Office, with Dr. Lulu Stader serving in the Managing Editor's role for the journal. This arrangement appears to be working well.

We continue to work under the system in which OUP puts accepted papers up in manuscript form on the Advanced Access section of the journal's web site as soon as the authors have completed the copyright form. The 'raw' manuscript is replaced later with the typeset, proof-corrected version, once it is finished. As seen in the Publisher's report, OUP consistently meets their target of having manuscripts appear in Advanced Access within about a week of the authors receiving their acceptance email.

Processing of accepted papers, from export of the accepted manuscript by the Editorial Office through typesetting and print publication has been running sufficiently smoothly that we have reached the point where we have no cushion of accepted papers - once the authors return their corrected proofs the paper will appear in the very next print issue. This is actually causing some nervous moments around the time copy is due to the printers, so we may need to print one or two 'thin' issues to build back in at least a minimal buffer.

With major delays that are attributable to the editorial office being largely eliminated, it is time to start focusing on improving the manuscript handling

time through the review and AE recommendation process. The report generated by Manuscript Central showing the time taken by every individual review through the 2012 calendar year is not a very pretty sight:



We ask for reviews to be returned within 21 days, but we are obviously not doing a very good job of enforcing compliance. I will get together with Andy and Lulu and see if we can come up with changes to the reminder email system that might help.

III. OUP

Cathy Kennedy retired from her position as Senior Publisher with OUP at the end of August, 2012. Cathy was an invaluable resource, and regularly shared her extensive experience in the journal publishing business with those of us who were summarily shoved into the world of journal publishing on the basis of an SSB Council vote.

Jennifer Boyd continues to operate as the temporary Publisher for the journal. I have not yet been informed by OUP if this will be permanent.

The OUP Production Editors do not usually make it into the Editor's report, but I do want to acknowledge the current and immediate-past PEs because they have been particularly helpful to work with. For some two years, journal production was handled in England by Peter Jones, and Peter was very

helpful in sorting out a number of issues that had developed over the years. This past Fall, production of the journal returned to Cary, NC, under the guidance of Adrienne Loggins. Adrienne has likewise been very helpful. One thing that will make a visible difference in the journal is that the dates listed for “Received”, “Reviews returned” (= 1st decision), and “Accepted” will finally be grounded in reality on a consistent basis.

IV. AE work loads

We appear to have about the right number of Associate Editors at the moment. Given the level of review input typically found in each *Systematic Biology* AE report, it is important to keep the number of manuscripts handled by each AE to a reasonable value. No individual AE was assigned to any more than 12 new manuscripts in 2012. If the number of submissions continues to increase, then Andy will probably want to expand the AE ranks to keep pace.

V. Editorial Transition

I am (extremely) grateful to Andy Anderson for accepting the job of editing the journal for the next four-year term.

VI. Associate Editors

Andy will report on new AEs who have begun their terms in 2013. I want to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of all of the Associate Editors with whom I have had the privilege to work over the past 3.5 years. If you have ever submitted a manuscript to the journal then you probably understand the extraordinary level of effort and care that our AEs put in to every report. Their job is part manager, part reviewer, and part babysitter (sometimes they need to babysit reviewers, but other times they must babysit the Editor).

Elizabeth Jockusch chose to end her outstanding run as AE at the end of 2012. Thank you, Elizabeth, for doing a fine job for many years.