# Editor-In-Chief Elect Report
23 June 2022

I describe below the main activities I undertook during the first half of 2022. Note that these statistics refer only to new submissions received since January 2022. They do not include resubmitted manuscripts from 2021, handled by the current EIC Bryan Carstens.

1. Submissions and Decisions: As of June 23rd 2022, I have processed 101 submissions, of which 40 received a desk rejection ("Not appropriate for journal"), and 61 were sent out for review; of these three were rejected after first revision. The table below splits these numbers by manuscript type. "Regular original research articles" continue to be the most popular, and "Software for Systematics and Evolution", the least. Notice that some manuscripts under the category "Not appropriate" are papers that were initially submitted as Regular articles and rejected without review by the AE or EIC, but the authors were asked to resubmit under a different category, typically as a Spotlight (many authors do not seem to distinguish between this category and Regular articles). No Book Reviews.
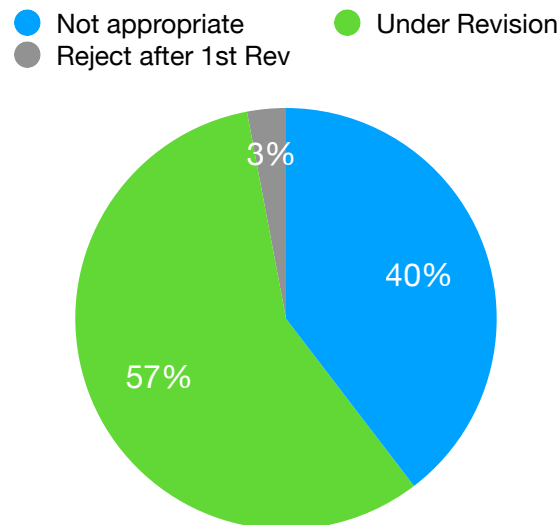
Categories	Minor Rev	Resubmit	Not appropriate	Reject (after 1st rev.)	Under Rev.	TOTAL
Regular	5	18	27	2	14	66
Spotlight	0	3	5	0	7	15
Software Syst&Evol	0	1	5	0	2	8
Point of View	0	3	3	1	5	12
TOTAL	5	25	**40**	**3**	28	**101**

2. Manuscript turnover: The average time to first decision on manuscripts ranges between 14 days ("Not appropriate for journal") to 70 days for "Manuscripts with Decisions". Some manuscripts have been on review for nearly four months (120 days). These delays were caused often by reviewers not responding, but there were also delays on the part of the AE and the EIC (during May, I worked for the Spanish State Research Agency and accumulated a 17-days backlog, but I was back on schedule in June). Below, I provide some suggestions to improve the manuscript turnover time.

3. Systematic Biology Editorial Office: In early May, JAC KERON, our Editorial Officer, left and was replaced by ANDRE BORGES. Andre is based on Poland and has extensive experience in working with ScholarOne; he currently oversees a portfolio of 8 journals for PA Editoria,l and he also worked with Ayesha at ASN. The replacement has gone really smoothly.

4. Renovation Editorial Board: In January 2022, the Editorial Board was formed by 45 AEs, with a 70/30 male/female proportion. Over these six months, some editors stepped down due to various reasons.
• CORRIE MOREAU (Cornell University)
• JACK ESSELSTYN (Louisiana State University)
• JAMES OAK (Auburn University)
• MARK HOLDER (University of Kansas) (?)

I have started recruiting new AEs to expand the Editorial board and to decrease the work load on editors (ideally, each editor should not handle more than two manuscripts simultaneously). The criteria for recruitment has been to cover areas where we lack expertise or want to reinforce it. As of June 2022, 8 new editors have joined our board (I will keep inviting new editors and make a stronger effort to achieve a gender-balance editorial board).

• MICHAEL LANDIS (Washington University in St. Louis: Bayesian inference, trait evolution, biogeography, methods development)
• DANIELE SILVESTRO (University of Lausanne: Bayesian inference, macroevolution, trait models, fossil record, methods development)
• STEPHANE GUINDON (LIRMM, CNRS, France: Bayesian and ML inference, statistical phylogeography, phylogenomics, methods development)
• CHRISTINE BACON (University of Gothenburg: Plant systematics, phylogenomics, macroevolution, biogeography)
• TIINA SARKINEN (University of Edinburgh: Plant Systematics, phylogenomics, macroevolution, macroecology)
• SIAVASH MIRARAB (University of California, San Diego: Bayesian and ML inference, molecular evolution, phylogenomics)

Accepted but asked to start in January 2023 due to family reasons:
• SERAINA KLOFSTEIN (University of Basel: invertebrate systematics, Bayesian inference, morphological parametric models)
• FRAN ERWIN RHEINDT (National University of Singapore: bird systematics, phylogenomics and population genomics, animal speciation)

Implemented or suggested editorial changes:

– Reviews: We have an issue that when reviewers attached their comments as a separate Word document rather than writing them in the 'Comments' field, this field will be empty in the decision letter, and authors will complain about not finding the review file in ScholarOne. Now, authors are asked to paste their review in the corresponding box in ScholarOne. If an

author wants to upload an annotated manuscript with comments, s/he can do it via the Editorial Office.

- <u>Figures</u>**:** Authors are now asked to embed the figure and accompanying legends (under each figure) within the main text (instead of after the reference list). For resubmitted manuscripts, authors are also asked to submit their figures as separate files.

- <u>Latex template</u>: The Latex template needs to be updated, since it is out of sync with the current SystBiol style. OUP has offered us one of their standard PDF templates, but it will imply a too drastic change in style. We opted for updating the template, while relying on the typesetters to correct any divergences in the ms. style during the production process.

- <u>Font and colors</u>: AE Dr Lars Jermiin has proposed to replace the current font, Times New Roman, by Helvetica or Arial, to help readers with reading or sight disabilities.

- <u>Data sharing policy</u>: He has also proposed to revise our data sharing policy to comply with Transparency and Reproducibility. Data, which requires a CC0 license, is now stored in Dryad, while software, requiring a CCYB license, is stored in Zenodo. The problem arises for genomic pipelines, where data and scripts are interlinked; these scripts are free to use/reproduce without any required citation/notice and thus could be assigned a CC0 license.

- <u>Decision categories:</u> There is discussion about reintroducing *Major Revision* as a decision category for manuscripts not rejected at first decision. Reviewers and AEs get confused between *Accept with Minor Revision* and *Reject; encourage resubmission* because the first is perceived as too lenient (if there are changes to make), and the second, as too strict if the manuscript is on track to acceptance but requires re-analysis. My suggestion is to have the three decision types (Minor / Full / Resubmit), but I will ask the Editorial Board's opinion.

- <u>Reviewers' fatigue</u>: As with other journals, we have problems to find reviewers. Reviewers are sometimes put off by those "14 days to complete your review", so editors should be able to control the frequency of the reminder letters, to allow for more time in the case of complex or very long manuscripts. It must be clear that we favor a good review over a hasty one, since the former helps us, EIC and AEs, to make appropriate decisions. In other journals, ScholarOne offers a list of potential reviewers according to keywords in the manuscript title and abstract. In Evolution, I used the "Early Career Reviewer Database - Ecology, Evolution, Systematics (Responses)", with more than 800 names.

- <u>"Meet the Editors"</u>: The Editorial Board web description could include for each Associate Editor, a brief profile describing her/his research interests; it would help the authors to select their recommended editor (now, it is only the name, email, and university affiliation).