

This document summarizes my activities as EIC during the 2020 calendar year.

### ***Systematic Biology***

- I. *Submissions & decisions*: We have received 355 original submissions for 2020 and 92 revised manuscripts. This represents a new record high for the journal. As an aside, I am so conditioned at this point that I read a new submission when I have my first cup of coffee every morning. Decisions on original submissions can be seen on page 7 of the attached report, but basically are as follows: 35% rejected outright, 55% reject with possible revisions, and 9.5% accepted (sometimes pending final changes). Many of the papers that are rejected with revisions end up being published, and our overall acceptance rate is ~42% on original submissions. In general, everything seems to be running smoothly with *Systematic Biology*. Refer to the Virtual Editorial Office report for more details.
- II. *Manuscript handling*. Our average submission takes 61 days to return a decision to the authors, but there is a lot of variance around this number depending on the manuscript category. For example, the 'Reject-not appropriate for journal' decision averages 15 days due to desk rejections, while the 'Reject-encourage Revision' decision averages 81 days. We'll keep trying to work on improving the turn-around time on manuscripts, but in general I feel that this is exceptionally good considering 2020 in general. More details provided in the Virtual Editorial Office report for details on how OUP handles accepted manuscripts, data on manuscript submissions, turnaround time, etc. In short, accepted manuscripts are made available via the journal web site's "Advance Access" section in less than a week once the authors complete the copyright form.
- III. *Oxford University Press. Jac Keron*, *Systematic Biology's* new managing editor, has been an amazing resource for myself and the Associate Editors. She is responsive to questions, great at providing information when I request it, and aggressive with encouraging people to get things done on time.
- IV. Associate Editor News and Workloads
  - a. We currently have 46 active Associate Editors which includes 10 AEs that were recruited in 2020 (Daren Eaton, Jeanne Serb, Michael Matschiner, Sebastian Höhna, Corrie Moreau, Ryan Folk, Danielle Edwards, Vanessa González, Alan Lemmon, Jeremy Beaulieu and 10 others that were recruited in 2019 (Liliana Dávalos, Rayna Bell, Sara Ruane, April Wright, Claudia Solis-Lemus, Lisa Barrow, James Rosindell, Jennifer Mandel, Jason Bond, Jacob Esselstyn). Eleven AEs have recently completed their terms, including Adam Leache, Brian Moore, Brian Wiegmann, David Bryant, David Morrison, David Posada, Jeremy Brown, Robert Lanfear, Susanne Renner, Thomas Buckley, and Laura Kubatko. I am extremely appreciative for all of their hard work on behalf of the journal.
  - b. Our goal is to have a moderate workload for each AE. Currently, we have an average of 5.7 (+/-2.9) manuscripts per year.
  - c. New AEs recruited. I have recruited two AEs to start in 2021 (Ya Yang, Stacey Smith). I welcome suggestions for other people to potentially consider.
- V. Spotlight Category Manuscripts
  - a. These are popular! We've had 55 submissions to this category. My goal is to publish 6-9 annually.
- VI. Cascading Reviews
  - a. We have entered into an agreement with *The Auk* for cascading manuscript reviews. Please see our MOU (attached).

***Bulletin of the Society of Systematic Biologists***

- I. *Motivation:* For several years, the Society of Systematic Biologists has been thinking about the services and benefits that we offer to our members. Consistent with other efforts, we have launched a new journal, named *Bulletin of the Society of Systematic Biologists* (BSSB) that will publish open access scientific manuscripts for members of the Society of Systematic Biologists. Initially, these publications will be free of article processing charges. In the future if such charges are levied, we will strive to make them reflect the actual costs associated with publishing rather than the going rate of the publishing industry. The BSSB will be compliant with initiatives such as [Plan S](#) from the onset, and publish [open access gold](#) publications. The goal of the BSSB is not to compete with *Systematic Biology*, or any other systematics journals, but to publish work that is valuable to our members, important to our discipline, and not likely to be published by other scientific societies. Importantly, the features of our publishing platform will enable us to publish as many articles of any length as we would like, which means that our criteria for publication will be whether the work is methodologically sound and a contribution to the literature rather than based on the perceived impact.
- II. *Name.* After soliciting suggestions from SSB members, discussing these with the council, and asking for votes we choose a name. *Bulletin of the Society of Systematic Biologists* was chosen from a long list of contenders. This was actually an important step, because it enabled us to complete the application for the journal and to formalize our agreement with the OSU Library system.
- III. *Relationship with library.* The OSU Library is a member in a coalition of other libraries from AAU universities that are working to provide alternative to the commercial publishing industry. Our library Dean has allocated three staff people to run the [Library Publishing Program](#) that covers the back end costs associated with publishing (web sites, manuscript submission and tracking software, file storage, registration with search engines, registration with DOI, academic tracking services, etc.). Our agreement states that OSU will maintain the Bulletin website and published articles for as long as the University exists as an entity. This will allow us to publish online open-access articles for our members at a very low cost.
- IV. *Financials.* We are currently operating under a budget approved by the Council at our summer 2020 meeting. See our MOU (attached).
- V. *Editorial Assistant:* An Editorial Assistant was hired in November of 2020. Her name is Dinah Ward, and she is a third year OSU student who wants to work in scientific publishing as an editor for her career. Dinah is currently developing MS Word and LaTeX templates for the new journal.
- VI. *Inaugural Issue:* Meg Daly and Felipe Zapata have been appointed as AEs for the Bulletin. They are organizing an inaugural issue in collaboration with participants from their NSF-Funded workshop on modernizing monographic research, will be contributing a series of articles, opinion pieces, and other writing related to this workshop.
- VII. *Associate Editors:* In addition to Meg Daly and Felipe Zapata, I have recruited the following people to serve as Associate Editors for the Bulletin: Andy Anderson, Chris Simon, David Baum, David Hillis, Evandro Moraes, Jack Sullivan, Joe Cook, Marshall Hedin, Prosanta Chakrabarty, Scott Edwards, Tom Near, Vera Solferini. I am actively looking for a few more people if anyone has any suggestions. Also, please see the invitation letter (attached).
- VIII. The big cost going forward with the Bulletin will be those associated with the copy editing. Meg and Felipe have money to pay for these services for the first issue, and we think that we'll probably have some left over for copy editing of some of the subsequent articles. It is a bit unclear how the copy-editing works or what the best approach to take is, but we'll see what

- we can do with our budget for 2021. Dinah Ward is developing LaTeX and MS Word templates for articles now, and who will act as the managing editor once we open up for submissions. In any event, we have enough to get started and to survive the first few years.
- IX. *Timeline.* We hope to open for manuscript submissions in February and publish our inaugural issue in June or July of 2020. The first issue will consist of papers from the Modernizing Monographic Research working group. With any luck, we will publish two issues in 2021, with the second appearing in January. I encourage (beg?) you to consider sending work from your lab to the Bulletin so that we can get through the initial stage of trying to establish credibility with our peers.
- X. Sydney Decker, a Ph D student at OSU, developed a logo for the journal:



### Discussion items.

- I. A new EIC of *Systematic Biology* is due to be chosen in 2021. The EIC-elect term will begin in 2022 with a year that overlaps with my final year in the position, and then in 2023 this person will take over completely.
- II. We have never really discussed the Editorship of the *Bulletin*. As founding editor, I am happy to continue in this role for a while, but we probably want to think about the structure of this position once we have more details. I feel strongly that the editorship of the Bulletin be a separate position from the editorship of Systematic Biology.
- III. The workload for the *Systematic Biology* EIC has grown quite a bit over the years. I've been on sabbatical in 2020-21 which has made this manageable, but it is getting to be a job that is too big for one person. If the trajectory of submissions continues to rise, we will need to consider alternative structures to the EIC position at some point if we continue to expect that the EIC reads all submissions, reviews, recommendations, etc.

### Attachments:

MOU between SSB and OSU regarding Bulletin Funds

MOU between SSB and The AUK regarding cascading manuscripts

Bulletin Invitation Letter to potential AEs