

Editor-in-Chief June 2021 Report

This document describes my main activities during the first half of 2021. Note that it is inclusive of the journals *Systematic Biology* and *The Bulletin of the Society of Systematic Biologists*.

- I. **Submissions & Decisions.** As of June 15, *Systematic Biology* has received 184 manuscripts in 2021. This is up slightly from the pace at which we received manuscripts in 2020.
- II. **Manuscript handling.** Refer to the Publisher's and Virtual Editorial Office report for details on how OUP handles accepted manuscripts, data on manuscript submissions, etc. For the first 6 months of 2021, we have the following figures for the average length of time from submission to first decision:
 - Point of View: 47 days
 - Regular Manuscript: 42 days
 - Software for Systematics and Evolution: 20 days
 - Spotlight Article: 45 days

These average decision times have steadily decreased over the last 2.5 years, largely due to the dedication of our Associate Editors and the fact that I have become more aggressive with editorial desk decisions to reject papers that do not seem to fit well in the journal.

- III. **Oxford University Press.** Ayesha Saldanha has replaced Jeannine Botos as the Publisher for *Systematic Biology*. Jeannine had previously replaced Julia McDonnell. All seems to be running smoothly in terms of the support that OUP offers, although we continue to have some problems with the occasional paper. In these cases, Ayesha and Jeannine are responsive to our needs.
- IV. **Associate Editors.** Four new AEs (Jaime Oaks, Stacey Smith, Ya Yang, Ziheng Yang) were added in the first 6 months of 2021. I continue to attempt to improve the gender balance to the Associate Editors of the journal. The percentage has increased from ~ 6% of AEs to ~ 30% of AEs since 2019.
- V. **Update on the Bulletin.** We currently have six manuscripts in review at the *Bulletin*. These are all from the special issue that was organized by Meg Daly and Felipe Zapata. In the next months, I will be soliciting articles for the *Bulletin*, particularly in the Review category. I would like to ask all of you to consider (i) submitting papers to the *Bulletin*, and (ii) to talk up the journal to your friends and colleagues.

Major objectives remaining.

- I. **Replacement EIC.** I plan to assist President-Elect O'Meara and President Kubatko in selecting the next EIC of *Systematic Biology*. I am happy to serve as a reference for potential nominees, and obviously have a vested interest in finding a replacement.
- II. **Bulletin Launch.** We are now live for submissions at <https://ssbbulletin.org>, we are working through bugs in the review process, refining our LaTeX templates, manuscript handling procedures, etc.
- III. Data policy.
- IV. **Bulletin Succession Plan.** I would like to continue as acting EIC for the *Bulletin* when my term at *Systematic Biology* is up. I feel like the pandemic really slowed down progress on the *Bulletin* and I would like to see it through until it feels like the journal will be successful and sustainable.