

It is in the best interest of the Society of Systematic Biologists to build our membership. One impediment to this is that many scientists who routinely publish phylogenetic trees and associated work feel as if they cannot aspire to publish their research in Systematic Biology. Our journal owes much of its reputation to methodological work that moves the field forward, but these scientists feel that their research lacks this methodological dimension and consequently submit their work to journals such as Molecular Phylogenetics & Evolution or journals focused on particular taxa. Whether or not this is a fair critique, it is one that has been expressed to me by many people over the years, and it is understandable that someone who feels as if they cannot publish their work in the journal of the society might not be interested in maintaining a membership. I believe that some sort of an expansion of Systematic Biology, one with a focus on publishing the best of the empirical phylogenetic investigations, could enhance our membership in a manner that would help to secure the long-term future of the Society of Systematic Biologists. There are multiple forms that such an expansion could take. One model is the expansion of the existing journal, perhaps by adding a new section focused explicitly on empirical work. Under this model, AEs and reviewers would be presented with an option that would allow them to recommend a submission that might be currently be deemed methodologically sound but primarily focused on the empirical system for publication in this section. The new section could either be added to the print journal, perhaps via an expansion in the number of issues published each year, or a new online-only section could be created. The key aspect would be that the same AEs and reviewers would handle these submissions. Alternatively, a second model is to create a new journal (e.g., Systematic Biology Letters or Systematic Biology Presents) and publish these manuscripts in the new journal. Many journals, including Molecular Ecology, are associated with other journals that share AEs. For example, AEs for Molecular Ecology are presented with the option of recommending that a manuscript that was submitted to Molecular Ecology for publication in Molecular Ecology Resources. It may be the case that this new journal would require a new editor or some reorganization in the way that submissions are handled. Clearly, there are details to be worked out here, but my willingness to be considered for the Editor in Chief position stems in large part from my desire to expand the journal.

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