

**BOTANY 2020, BSA Board and Council Report  
Virtual! Via Zoom, July 2020**

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The past year has been interesting, to say the least. For publications, we experienced several highlights, as well as having to deal with the “lowlight” that is the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Highlights** over the past year:

- **Increased Journal Impact Factor for both journals:** Although the IF is not the only measure of quality for a journal, and everyone recognizes it is not a *perfect* metric, it is still a positive indicator for any journal when the IF increases. The **2019 IF for *AJB* is 3.038** (up from **2.841** last year) **and for *APPS* it is 1.591** (up from **1.232** last year).
- **Establishing an Early-Career Advisory Board and Modifying the APPS Reviewing Board:**
  - The Early-Career Advisory Board (ECAB) is up and running, thanks to the leadership of our Director-at-Large for Publications, Emily Sessa. The ECAB members help with social media; recommend papers from preprint servers for *AJB* and *APPS*; suggest topics and authors for Reviews and special issues; and potentially edit Wikipedia articles to cite *AJB/APPS* articles as appropriate. [Check out one of the cool “Twitter Takeovers” in late March by Rocío Deanna: [# Fruit](#) ; <https://bit.ly/3h9avNy>.) Current members of the ECAB are listed here: <https://cms.botany.org/home/publications/ecab.html>.
  - [APPS Reviewing Editor Board](#): In 2020, *APPS* expanded the remit for its Reviewing Editor Board to provide new opportunities for post-doc and senior grad student researchers who are interested in gaining a behind-the-scenes understanding of the editorial and publication processes. We received 37 applications, with the expectation that 15 will be accepted for the board. We are hoping to make a final decision by July 20, in time for the *APPS* editorial board meeting.
- **[AJB Reviews](#):** We launched the new Reviews series for *AJB* in late 2019, anticipating that publishing good, timely Reviews will contribute to botanical scholarship and also help garner citations for the journal. The Reviews team, led by Jannice Friedman, with support from Emily Sessa, Pam Diggle, and Amy McPherson, is actively recruiting contributors. To date, we have received six

submissions, with several additional contributions expected.

- **Discontinuing Primer Notes for APPS:** As of November 1, 2019, *APPS* no longer accepts Primer Notes for consideration. The last Primer Notes were published in the May 2020 issue.
- **Outreach and Collaboration:** In support of the BSA's commitment to greater international outreach and collaboration, the BSA publications group and Wiley hosted a free author workshop at the XXI Congreso Mexicano de Botánica on October 23, 2019, in Aguascalientes, Mexico. Amy McPherson (BSA/*AJB*), Gillian Greenough (Wiley), Heather Cacanindin (BSA), and Marcelo Pace (UNAM) represented the society and our publications.

**Lowlight:** The COVID-19 Pandemic (but even that resulted in a few positives)

- Contingency Plans
  - Staff at the BSA headquarters in St. Louis, including the publications team, have been working from home since mid-March. This is working well, and we will continue to WFH for the foreseeable future.
  - In late March, Wiley contacted its publishing partners with their plans for adapting to the pandemic and stay-at-home orders worldwide: flexible work schedules and locations in their US and non-US locations; temporary halt to printing (for a brief period); recommendation to us to publish smaller issues (just in case); and to anticipate potential delays in production because we just "didn't know" what was going to happen.
  - In fact, while there were a few slowdowns initially, it has mostly been business-as-usual with little disruption.
  - Wiley recommended that we also develop a written contingency plan for the editorial office and our editors. They provided a template for accomplishing this, which we will embark on this fall.
- Postponed Strategy Day:
  - Originally, our Wiley-BSA publications strategy day was scheduled for April 25, 2020. This in-person meeting was canceled because of the pandemic but will be reconsidered for later this year, potentially in virtual format.

### **Open Access and Plan S**

The plans for more "open" science continue, but the pace of [Plan S](#) has slowed down a little, and some of the deadlines for compliance have been extended. *APPS* is an OA journal, and *AJB* is covered because we are partnering with Wiley, which is engaging in several transformative deals.

See also the reports from Wiley, prepared by Gillian Greenough, Executive Editor, Life and Physical Sciences, Research & Society Services (our main contact at Wiley).

### **JCR, Impact Factor, and Journal Information**

The Journal Citation Report\* was released by Clarivate on June 29, 2020.

The 2019 Impact Factor for *AJB* is **3.038**, up from **2.841** last year.

The 2019 Impact Factor for APPS is **1.591**, up from **1.232** last year.

[\*The 2019 IF = the number of citations received by the journal in 2019 to articles published in 2017 and 2018/number of citable items published in 2017-2018.]

The 5-year Impact Factor for *AJB* is 3.245, down from 3.414 in 2018.

The 5-year Impact Factor for *APPS* is 1.914, up from 1.389 in 2018.

See the Wiley Report for more detailed information about the JCR.

#### **AJB:**

- In 2019, *AJB* handled 451 new submissions plus 375 revised manuscripts, and published 151 articles. The total number of pages published in 2019 was 1637. Submissions were received from 40 countries, with the highest numbers from the United States (170), China (85), Brazil (33), Mexico (21), Canada (20), Japan (17), Spain (12), and the Czech Republic (10).
- We have 56 Associate Editors from around the world: 34% of our Associate Editors are from countries other than the U.S., and 46% are women.
- The average time to first decision in 2019 was 34.6 days; 2018 was 35.2 days; and 2017 was 34.8 days. So far in 2020, this number is 33 days.
- Our overall acceptance rate for articles in *AJB* was 38% in 2019 (41.5% in 2018, and 38% in 2017).
- Pam Diggle is in the first year of her second 5-year term as Editor-in-Chief.
- In late 2019/early 2020 we welcomed new Associate Editors Mike Barker (The University of Arizona), Anna Bucharová (University of Münster, Germany), Anne-Laure Decombiex (UMR Botanique et Bioinformatique de l'Architecture des Plantes [AMAP], Montpellier, France), Ignacio Escapa (CONICET, Museo Paleontológico Egidio Feruglio [MEF], Argentina), and Juan Fornoni (Instituto de Ecología, UNAM, Mexico). For the current editorial board, see <https://bit.ly/3j8oBAp>
- Retirements from the Board include Oliver Bossdorf, Rubén Cúneo, Erika Edwards, Chris Ivey, and Don Les.

#### **Special Issues**

Special issues raise the visibility of the journal and demonstrate the breadth of our content, as well as (often) help our Impact Factor, by attracting high-quality and potentially well-cited papers. We thank all of the Special Issue/Section editors and contributing authors for their hard work in making their Society journal as strong as possible.

#### **2020:**

##### **Joint Cross-Publication Special issue—*AJB*, *APPS*, *IJPS***

- [Plant-Environment Interactions: Integrating across levels and scales](#)—led by Gina Baucom, Sharon Kessler, Katy Heath (*AJB*); Sally Chambers (*APPS*); and Dan Chitwood and Selena Smith (*IJPS*). The February issues of *AJB* and *APPS* (partial

issue) were devoted to this topic, and a Virtual Issue pulling together contributions from *AJB* and *APPS* was published on our hub page. Cross-publication promotion on social media included all three journals.

**AJB 2021:**

- [Life Without Water](#)—led by Karolina Heyduk, Michael McKain, and Olwen Grace.
- [Exploring the Potential of Angiosperms353, a Universal Toolkit for Flowering Plant Phylogenomics](#) a joint special issue with *APPS*; led by Bill Baker, Felix Forest, Lisa Pokorny, Steven Dodsworth, Jennifer Tate, and Sean Graham.

**APPS:**

- In 2019, *APPS* handled 178 new submissions plus 136 revised manuscripts, and published 80 articles (44 non-Primer Notes). So far in 2020 volume 8 (through the July issue), *APPS* published 54 articles (42 non-Primer Notes).
- Submissions were received from 34 countries, with the highest number from the United States (57), China (54), the Czech Republic (5), Pakistan (5), India (4), and Mexico (4). NOTE: In 2020, the number of submissions from China has decreased since Primer Notes were discontinued as an Article Type (5 MSS from China as of 14 July 2020).
- We have 8 Associate Editors and 11 Senior Associate Editors. Three (16%) of our Associate Editors are from a country other than the U.S., and 42% are women.
- The average time to first decision in 2019 was 39.5 days; 2018 was 30.7 days; and 2017 was 29 days.
- Our overall acceptance rate for *APPS* was 52% in 2019 (50% in 2018, and 55% in 2017).
- Theresa Culley is in year 2 of her third (3-year) term as Editor-in-Chief.
- In late 2019/early 2020 we welcomed new Associate Editors Karolina Heyduk (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa), Gil Nelson (iDigBio, Florida Museum of Natural History), Michael McKain (University of Alabama), and Susann Wicke (Humboldt University of Berlin). For the current editorial board, see <https://bit.ly/3fAs2gZ>.
- There are seven editors on the 2018–2020 Reviewing Editor Board; the current RE Board term ends August 31. We are currently evaluating a large and diverse group of applicants for the 2020-2022 RE Board. The role is being expanded so that REs will work closely with a mentoring Associate Editor to gain experience in the editorial process.

**APPS Special Issues:**

One of the key ways that we are working to increase visibility of *APPS* is with special issues. Three special issues have been published so far in 2020, with a fourth scheduled for August. One special issue is scheduled for 2021.

**2020:**

- *Conducting Botanical Research with Limited Resources: Low-Cost Methods in the Plant Sciences*—led by Gillian Dean, Alice Nakhumicha Muriithi, and Theresa Culley; published April 2020.
- *Machine Learning in Plant Biology*—led by Pam Soltis, Gil Nelson, Emily Meineke, and Alina Zare; publishing in two issues: June and July 2020.
- *Advances in Plant Phenomics: From Data and Algorithms to Biological Insights*—led by Sunil Kenchanmane Raju, James Schnable, and Addie Thompson; publishing in August 2020.

**2021:**

- *Exploring the Potential of Angiosperms353, a Universal Toolkit for Flowering Plant Phylogenomics*—a joint special issue with *AJB*, led by Matt Johnson, Angela McDonnell, Susann Wicke, and Norm Wickett for *APPS*.

**Outreach for Publications**

With 33,995 Facebook fans (up from 30,000), 9430 Twitter followers (up from 7000), and 1351 Instagram followers (up from a handful), we work hard to promote our authors' research beyond publication and beyond the immediate BSA audience. We promote each article via Twitter, but we also encourage authors to use the tools at the article site to promote their research via social media or direct e-mail. This combination of broad-based marketing and personal contact helps to enhance BSA membership and *AJB* author engagement. See also Wiley's marketing efforts in their report.

As approved by the Board in July 2019, the BSA recruited two **Student Social Media Liaisons**—Taran Lichtenberger (Northwestern University/Chicago Botanic Garden) and Jared Meek (Columbia University)—to enhance the BSA's social media reach, to help promote authors and their work published in BSA journals, and to promote the work and initiatives of BSA members.

**Your Research Publications Team**

Our BSA Director-At-Large for Publications is Dr. Emily Sessa (University of Florida).

The current *AJB* editorial staff and freelance editors include Ms. Amy McPherson (Director of Publications and Managing Editor for *AJB*) and Mr. Richard Hund (Project Manager for BSA and Production Editor for *AJB*); and Dr. Marian Chau (Assistant Editor/Highlights Editor), Dr. Beth Hazen (Manuscript Editor), Mr. Richard Earles (Copy Editor), Dr. Larry Skog (Copy Editor), and Ms. Elaine Firestone (Copy Editor).

Ms. Beth Parada is the Managing Editor for *APPS*. She receives support with copyediting from Dr. Sarah Jose.

Respectfully submitted July 16, 2020