

The realignment and reorganization of ESPR

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This issue of *Environmental Science and Pollution Research* (ESPR) introduces some of the major changes that are now taking place in our journal; namely the adoption of the Springer Editorial Manager for the handling of manuscripts, and the reorganization necessary to implement it. For a scientific journal to continue to be dynamic and relevant to the disciplines and scientific community that it serves, it must periodically evolve by realigning its focus and reorganizing how it is managed. This is especially true when an international journal changes publishers and management. To understand how the journal has changed and continues to change, it is important to remember the history and progress of our journal.

1 History

The first issue of ESPR was published in March 1994. The Editor-in-Chief was Otto Hutzinger, Professor of Ecological Chemistry, University of Bayreuth, Germany, and the Executive Editor was Ms. Almut Heinrich, ecomed publishers, Landsberg, Germany. In the first editorial of the journal, the Editor-in-Chief noted:

Pollutants and other environmental problems do not stop at political borders. Without exaggeration it can be stated that no activity affecting the environment in one

country is insignificant for another. Even in the age of intensified travel, telecommunication and computers, information exchange on environmental issues between different political entities and geographic areas is woefully lacking. Such exchange however is imperative to detect, understand and measure problems and eventually, evaluate, regulate, change and control them. Our new publication is conceived as a scientific journal. It is being launched as a medium of communication and information with a truly international and interdisciplinary outlook (Hutzinger 1994).

Under the skillful management of the journal by Almut Heinrich, a journal web site was established (<http://www.scientificjournals.com/espr>) that included some outstanding features such as **Author Index** and **Subject Index** of published articles that can be called up with the aid of key words (accessible for free). The **Web Editions** (back issues) now provides access to the articles that have been published from since 1994. The journal's **Online First** is a service where articles could be published shortly after their acceptance by reviewers, authors, and editors, and that may mean weeks or months before they appear in the printed journal.

In late 1994, the journal arranged to be abstracted by BIOSIS (Philadelphia, PA/USA), CABS (Current Awareness in Biological Sciences, Leicester/England), CAS (Chemical Abstracts Service, Columbus, OH/USA) and CEABA (Chemical, Engineering and Biotechnology Abstracts, Frankfurt/Germany). Beginning with the January 1995 issue, two additional abstracting services were provided; CIS (Congressional Information Service, Bethesda, MD/USA), and ISI (Institute for Scientific Information, Current Contents/Agriculture, Biology and Environmental Sciences, Philadelphia, PA/USA).

In 1997, ESPR formed an association with the Working Party on Chemistry and the Environment (WPCE), of the Federation of European Chemical Societies (FECS). The Chair of the Working Party noted that the purpose of the association with ESPR was in order to publish news from the Working

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Party, papers, and proceedings from their various events (Jensen 1997). With the 2nd issue in 2005, ESPR became “**The Official Organ of the European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences (formerly FECS), Division for Chemistry and the Environment (DCE)**” (Young et al. 2005). With the relationship firmly established with the DCE, the Executive Editor (now called the Publisher Editor) solicited editorials on “**Environmental Science – *Quo vadis***”, challenging the DCE, and the Editorial Board to define the direction, priorities, and funding of environmental science (Wangersky 2005; Scheringer 2005; Steinberg and Ade 2005; Wang 2005).

In March 2005, the editorial responsibilities were distributed among six Co-Editors. Concern was expressed that the system of handling manuscripts needed to be administratively addressed. The system at that time was one where Ms. Almut Heinrich, as the Publisher Editor received the manuscripts by e-mail and, who in turn solicited from the Co-Editors and the Editorial Board individuals to do the pre-review screening and the in-depth peer review (Young et al. 2005). The answer was to establish an **Electronic Submission System (ESS)**. In January 2006, the Editor-in-Chief (now Professor A. Young) and the Publisher Editor announced the implementation of the ESS “*as a system tailored to the requirements of our journal that would modernize and improve the process previously conducted by e-mail*” (Hutzinger 2005; Young and Heinrich 2006a). To effectively work, the ESS required the appointment of subject editors that would function as “Submission Editors” for all new manuscripts. The concept was that the Submission Editor would select the referees, with consideration of the author(s) suggestions, observe the deadlines, review the referee comments, and as appropriate summarize and recommend actions that were required of the author(s) before acceptance of the manuscript for publication.

By November 2006, the implementation of the ESS doubled the rate of submissions of journal articles resulting in a decision to publish 6 issues of ESPR beginning in 2007 (Young and Heinrich 2006b). To complement the ESS, the journal undertook a comprehensive review of the subject areas that had been published in the previous 12 years. This led to the development of the **Subject Area Framework** that provided the ESS with a critical mechanism to conduct high quality peer review of the many manuscripts that represented the diverse areas of environmental science, and hence the scope of the journal (Young and Heinrich 2006b). Simultaneously, it was recognized that there was a need for an additional type of manuscript to be published by the journal, i.e., the **Research Communication**. The concept of the Research Communication was that the preparation of an article would not exceed two journal pages and would be a way to capture innovative ideas, ground-breaking results, and novel methodologies in environmental and pollution research, and would be a format

for use in preparing proceedings of conferences that could become Special Issues of ESPR (Young 2006).

ESPR first appeared in the 1998 edition of the Journal Citation Reports (JCR) with an Impact Factor of 0.942, placing it 50 of 126 titles in the ‘Environmental Sciences’ category of the JCR (science edition). The 2002 JCR assigned ESPR with an Impact Factor of 1.238. The ISI Science Citation Index assigned ESPR with an Impact Factor of 1.518 in 2005, and with an Impact Factor of 1.980 in 2006 (Hollert et al. 2007). **The ISI Science Citation Index assigned ESPR with an Impact of 3.894 in 2007, placing it Number 10 of 160 journals in the Environmental Sciences category.** The *Immediacy Index* for 2007 was 1.12 and, hence the journal ranked Number 5 of 160 in the Environmental Sciences category. Thus, as ESPR completed its 14th Volume in 2007, it had become an increasingly important journal within the global environmental science community (Heinrich and Young 2007). It was now publishing seven regular issues, and an examination of environmental research articles published from 2005 through 2006 indicated that scientists from 31 countries had published articles in ESPR, representing 127 research institutions (Young and Heinrich 2007). On 31 December 2007, ESPR and its “Sister Journals” (LCA, JSS, and UWSF) were transferred to a new Publisher, Springer.

2 Embarking on new opportunities with springer

Beginning with the January 2008 issue of ESPR (Volume 15), Springer assumed the responsibility for publishing ESPR. Springer has publishing houses located in 20 countries. It publishes 1,700 journals and employees 5,000 people, and its consolidated sales in 2007 were EUR 77 million. Thus, the move to Springer is now allowing ESPR to ‘exploit’ and expand its full potential. The range of activities, operational basis, and worldwide distribution are being extended at Springer, including the opening of new gateways and opportunities for our authors and our associates. As Dr. Paul Roos, the Editorial Director, Environmental Sciences Springer, Heidelberg Germany, stated in his Welcoming Editorial in the November 2007 issue of ESPR:

I look forward to cooperating with all of you and assure you that the four journals are a great concern of mine. Almut B. Heinrich and I will strive at not only maintaining but also improving the quality and reputation of the journals. Your gracious support will gratefully be appreciated (Roos 2007).

Throughout 2008, the number of submissions of abstracts and subsequent manuscripts significantly increased. In the July 2008 issue, Almut Heinrich attributed this increase to the new Impact Factor:

During the recent years, the evaluation of journals through the Impact Factor has also been applied to the evaluation of academic institutes and research institutions. Their scientific staffs are urged to only publish in journals having a high Impact Factor. The pressure, in particular on young scientists, is immense (Heinrich 2008).

By November 2008, it had become obvious that the tremendous increase in submissions could no longer be adequately handled by the current Electronic Submission System. Moreover, the solicitation of Submission Editors and referees was placing significant burdens on Subject Editors, Associate Editors, the Publisher Editor, and the Editor-in-Chief. Discussions between the Editor-in-Chief and the Editorial Director at Springer concluded that it was now necessary to seriously consider the adoption of a new and more simplified system of handling manuscripts. In February 2009, the Editor-in-Chief subsequently attended a training session in Heidelberg, Germany on Editorial Manager (EM), the Springer system of handling manuscripts. At that time, the decision was made to proceed with the adoption of the EM System, and the date of conversion to the EM was selected as 1 May 2009. Simultaneously, the decision was made to request that Ms. Almut Heinrich step down as Managing Editor of ESPR after 16 years of faithful and dedicated service to the Journal. In recognition for the family of scientific journals she created that have contributed to environmental education on a high level, Almut Heinrich was awarded the SETAC (Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry) Europe Environmental Education Award at its Annual Meeting in Warsaw, Poland on 25 May 2008 (Young et al 2008).

Following the February meeting in Heidelberg, the Editor-in-Chief and the Springer's Editorial Director for Environmental Sciences traveled to Zurich, Switzerland and met with the Executive Committee of the Division for Chemistry and the Environment (DCE). A new agreement is being negotiated with the DCE, and the Chair, Prof. Dr. Walter Giger, will be commenting in an Editorial for the June 2009 issue of ESPR on the role of the Chair and the DCE in providing evaluations and recommendations to improve and ensure the international competitiveness and reputation of ESPR.

3 Editorial manager

Support of the journal publishing process for ESPR is provided by the Springer Production Department long before an article is accepted. Within Springer Production is the Journal Editorial Office (JEO) that oversees the online manuscript submission and peer review system, specifically Editorial Manager. By utilizing Editorial Manager, the journal will improve the peer-review turnaround times, increased journal submissions and

will be able to provide real-time statistics of the process. Most importantly, Editorial Manager is configurable for various workflow systems. Additionally, Editorial Manager will automatically enhance references in authors' articles by links through PubMed and CrossRef to validate the references and reformat them in a journal defined-style. This contributes to reducing publication time for the accepted article. At the same time Editorial Manager eases the work of the reviewers by utilizing various databases such as Google Scholar, Highwire, Ovid, PubMed, Scholar Universe, Scopus and SpringerLink among others to search on the peer review data.

4 The global journal workflow

Once an article has been accepted in Editorial Manager by ESPR, it will be transferred to the Springer production system. This workflow, while highly automated, contains a number of key checks to maintain the quality of the production process and has the flexibility to support specific requirements that may be applicable to ESPR. It utilizes both full text XML and TeX coding of the journal articles. The turn around time in publishing articles online first has been significantly reduced in the past and since the workflow is automated, it can measure the time frames for the various steps of the production process and produce reports for the journal through the use of the new FAST tool.

5 The submission of manuscripts

Springer's guidelines for the preparation of the manuscripts are available at www.springer.com and visible from Editorial Manager. With Editorial Manager, manuscripts will be submitted with their abstracts in a single process. Ms. Cristina Chua, an experienced Journals Editorial Office Assistant (JEO Assistant), will be replacing Ms. Almut Heinrich, and will help ensure that the submitted manuscripts are properly prepared and that they will flow smoothly through the reviewing system. Once it is determined that the manuscript is properly prepared, the JEO will forward the manuscript to the Editor-in-Chief for acceptance or rejection. If accepted, the Editor-in-Chief will forward the manuscript to one of nine Editors.

6 The new editors of ESPR

The future success of ESPR will depend largely upon the selection of and the acceptance by qualified Editors for the journal. The criteria and tasks for Editors:

- They must be top level and high-impact experts in disciplines/subject areas to represent the Journal's scientific scope,

- They will have full responsibility for submissions allocated to their discipline/subject area,
- They will be the key individuals for the final decision on the manuscript,
- They will be encouraged to identify and invite valuable contributions in their discipline,
- They will represent the Journal at professional meetings and institutions, and,
- Each Editor will be invited to serve for 2 years.
- They should recommend referees already in the new Referee Database, or recommend new referees,
- They should identify journal/Editor/staff problem areas and make recommendations
- They should identify opportunity subject areas and make recommendations to the Editors and Editor-in-Chief,
- They should contribute Commentaries, Editorials, Book Reviews, Research Articles and Critical Reviews of their subject area expertise, and,
- Each member will serve for 2 years.

7 Manuscript flow scheme

1. Authors submit manuscripts into Springer's Editorial Manager System,
2. The JEO Assistant makes technical check and assigns to the Editor-in-Chief,
3. The Editor-in-Chief does a first screening and triggers direct rejections,
4. The Editor-in-Chief assigns each manuscript to a fully responsible Editor,
5. The assigned Editors either select reviewers or reject manuscripts without reviewing, and,
6. Based on the reviews, the Editors decide on revision requirements, rejections, or acceptance of manuscripts.

Step 4 is performed based on a list of expertise topics submitted by the Editors. Later on, step 4 can be performed directly by the JOE at Springer. Each Editor will be encouraged to build up and enlarge the list of potential referees in his/her field. The Editor-in-Chief will assist in identifying referees, as well as a supporting Editorial Board. Guest Editors for Special ESPR Issues can also be introduced to the Editorial Manager.

8 The selection criteria and tasks for editorial board members

To support the new Editorial Manager System and the new Editors, an Editorial Board has been established. The criteria and tasks for the members of the Editorial Board are:

- They must be international experts in subject areas within the scientific scope of ESPR,
- They must be willing to serve as referees, and in exceptional cases as Guest Editor for a Special Issue or a Series in cooperation with an Editor, and track the manuscripts through the review process and recommend decisions to the assigned Editor,
- They should make recommendations to an Editor on the acceptance or rejection of a manuscript,

9 Summary

Environmental Science and Pollution Research is now in its 16th year of publication. It has made remarkable progress in its acceptance as one of the outstanding scientific journals in the environmental sciences. Effective on 1 May, it will transition from the ESS into a new system of handling manuscripts, the Springer Editorial Manager, and it will reorganize its editorial management by dropping the Subject Area Framework and adopting a system of Editors supported by a Editorial Board of internationally recognized scientists. It will strengthen its relation to the DCE, while providing a new level of manuscript processing and peer review. The future for ESPR is bright and we look forward to setting a new standard for environmental journals.

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