



The First Decade of *Biosemiotics*

Timo Maran¹ · Alexei Sharov² · Morten Tønnessen³

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The present issue of *Biosemiotics* is the final issue of volume number ten, which means that the journal celebrates its tenth anniversary. At this occasion we provide in this editorial introduction a short overview of the most important characteristics, tendencies and figures of the journal *Biosemiotics*.

An agreement to establish the journal was made in 2007 in cooperation between the International Society for Biosemiotics Studies and Springer Science + Business Media, with the first issues appearing in 2008. The agreed aim was to stimulate and communicate research in the field of biosemiotics, and to bring together scholars in biology, semiotics and the humanities with an interest in sign processes in nature. The history of biosemiotics as a discipline can be dated back at least to the 1960's (for overviews, see Favareau 2010; Kull 1999; Barbieri 2009). The founding Editor-in-Chief of *Biosemiotics* was the Italian molecular biologist, embryologist and theoretical biologist Marcello Barbieri, who held this position from 2008 to 2014. From the summer of 2013 and until the end of 2014, his editorship overlapped with that of the current editors.

In his introduction to the first issue of our journal, Barbieri described the field of biosemiotics by referring to two important points: First, the idea that semiosis is coextensive with life, i.e. that it never occurs in inanimate matter but always occurs in relation to life processes. And second, the project that favours naturalisation of semiosis and meaning, which implies to see these as first and foremost natural phenomena (Barbieri 2008). Basing a biosemiotic outlook on these two notions translates to suggesting that biosemiosis is real, possible to identify and delimit, and possible to study by the methods of natural science (which sometimes need reconfiguration, reinvention or enrichment drawing on reasoning in other, related scholarly fields).

✉ Timo Maran
timo.maran@ut.ee

¹ Department of Semiotics, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia

² Laboratory of Genetics, National Institute on Aging, Baltimore, MD, USA

³ Department of Social Studies, University of Stavanger, Stavanger, Norway

Today, almost ten years later, we can say that despite the diversity of views concerning the core and the limits of biosemiotics, these two characteristics have stood the test of time. Over the years, the journal *Biosemiotics* has become a vivid meeting place for ideas and authors coming from different branches of biology, cognitive science, linguistics, philosophy and history of science, animal studies, medicine and other disciplines interacting with biosemiotics proper.

This complex current of papers, topics and perspectives can be exemplified by the publications data. Over the years, the journal has published special issues on a variety of topics, edited by a number of guest editors: Semiotics of perception (eds. K. Lindström, M. Tønnessen, *Biosemiotics* 2010, 3(3)); Essays in Biohermeneutics (ed. A. Markoš, *Biosemiotics* 2011 4(2)); Information in Biosemiotics (eds. S. Brier, C. Joslyn, *Biosemiotics* 2013, 6(1)); Origins of Mind (eds. A. M. Winters, L. S. Swan, *Biosemiotics* 2013, 6(3); Code Biology (ed. M. Barbieri, *Biosemiotics* 2014, 7(2)), Toward a Definition of Biosemiotic Chance (ed. V. Alexander, *Biosemiotics* 2014, 7(3)); Semiotic Scaffolding (ed. J. Hoffmeyer, *Biosemiotics* 2015, 8(2)); Semiosis of Evolution (eds. A. Sharov, T. Maran, M. Tønnessen, *Biosemiotics* 2016, (9)1); Multi-level Semiosis: Towards a Heterarchical Perspective (eds. L.E. Bruni, F. Giorgi, *Biosemiotics* 2016, 9(3)); and Constructive Biosemiotics (eds. T. Vehkavaara, A. Sharov, *Biosemiotics* 2017, 10(2)). Indeed, the diversity of disciplinary perspectives and topics in special issues as well as among individual papers has been significant.

If we look at what papers has been granted readers' attention, feedback and citations to the biggest extent, we can observe that several of the most successful papers in these respects deal with the identity, history, concepts or basic research questions of the discipline of biosemiotics. Out of more than 300 published individual papers, the five most cited ones (based on Web of Science, 28.09.2017) are: (1) Barbieri 2009. A short history of biosemiotics. *Biosemiotics* 2(2): 221–245 (23 citations); (2) Kull et al. 2008. Biosemiotic questions. *Biosemiotics* 1(1): 41–55 (19 citations); (3) Kull 2010. Ecosystems are made of semiotic bonds: consortia, Umwelten, biophony and ecological codes *Biosemiotics* 3(3): 347–357 (18 citations); (4) Sueur and Farina 2015. Ecoacoustics: the ecological investigation and interpretation of environmental sound. *Biosemiotics* 8(3): 493–502 (17 citations); (5) Barbieri 2010. On the origin of language. A bridge between biolinguistics and biosemiotics. *Biosemiotics* 3(2): 201–223 (17 citations).

The combination of the strong paradigmatic core of biosemiotics, and its openness to dialogue with other disciplines, can probably be taken as a sign of the vitality of the field and of the journal. As a formal bibliographic measure of the journal, the Impact Factor of *Biosemiotics* (calculated by Web of Science) has had some ups and downs, but with elements of an upward trend if we consider that record levels have been reached at least every second year: 0,444 (2011), 0,364 (2012), 0,488 (2013), 0,593 (2014), 0,391 (2015), 0,964 (2016).

The journal has initiated a few special projects to increase the popularity and scientific rigor of biosemiotics. One such initiative is the Biosemiotic Glossary project, where different authors publish analyses of biosemiotic concepts by mapping and discussing past and present term usage in the biosemiotic community, including by way of a survey on each term analyzed. Until today the following biosemiotic concepts have been scrutinised under this project: Agent, agency (by Tønnessen. *Biosemiotics* 2015, 8(1), 125–143); Umwelt (by Tønnessen et al. *Biosemiotics* 2016, 9(1), 129–149; The semiotic threshold (by Rodríguez Higuera and Kull. *Biosemiotics* 2017, 10(1), 109–126);

Intentionality (by Favareau and Gare. *Biosemiotics* 2017, 10(3), this issue). The Glossary project is planned to continue in the coming years, with the aim to help building a shared understanding of the basic conceptual tools of biosemiotics, and awareness of variation in term usage.

Another initiative of the journal aiming at increasing the level of biosemiotic scholarship is the Biosemiotic Achievement Award competition. Every year, a selection panel consisting of three representatives, one from the journal's editorial board, one from Springer and one from the International Society for Biosemiotic Studies, choose the best paper published in *Biosemiotics* in the last volume in terms of scientific rigor, novelty and relevance to biosemiotics. So far, the Biosemiotic Achievement Award has been given to L. Chiu and S. F. Gilbert's for the paper "The birth of the holobiont: Multi-species birthing through mutual scaffolding and niche construction" (*Biosemiotics* 2015, 8(2), 191–210) and to S. Rodríguez for "Recurrences and agential meaning making: Laying a path in walking" (*Biosemiotics* 2016, 9(2), 169–184). It is the hope of the editors' that the Award program will help inviting young and new authors to publish with *Biosemiotics*.

On a final note, as the Editors-in-Chief currently serving the journal, we would like to express our deep gratitude to all authors, reviewers, members of the editorial board, guest editors of special issues, as well as to Springer's staff, all of whom have contributed valuably to the journal *Biosemiotics* in the last ten years. The hard work of many people behind the scenes is not so visible to the reader, even though their contributions may be essential to the very existence of the publication. In every respect, publishing a journal is truly a team effort – an endeavour of the entire academic collective of a given discipline. The highs and lows of the academic field regarded as an organic entity of sorts tend to become reflected in the quality of its journal, and vice versa. Perhaps the greatest lesson of the first decade of our journal, *Biosemiotics*, is that if anything, it is the collaborative effort towards deeper understanding in biosemiotics that has brought success. And it is only by collaborative efforts, and team spirit, that we can advance biosemiotics even further. We look forward to developing *Biosemiotics* in this spirit and working together with you all in the years to come.

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