Changes in *AMBIO* policies

Bo Söderström

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Once per year, following our editorial meeting in May, *AMBIO*'s instructions for authors are revised. All author, reviewer, and reader comments that we have received are taken into account to improve our routines. Most years, the revisions are relatively minor but this year, we would like to call your attention to six major new features.

- (1) Systematic reviews to identify, appraise, and synthesize high-quality evidence have for a long time been crucial to evidence-based medicine. Evidence-based approaches to support decision- and policy-makers are growing in importance also in environmental research. To summarize and identify significant patterns that otherwise may go undetected in a large number of individual studies, systematic reviews often use meta-analyses. Such quantitative analyses require three simple measures to be reported: *mean effect size, sample size, and some measure of variability*. Surprisingly, few original research articles report these data, precluding their inclusion in meta-analyses (Haddaway 2014). *AMBIO*'s revised instructions for authors will explicitly request researchers to provide such information when applicable.
- (2) Editors and reviewers should be focusing on the quality of science and not the format. To make the submission process faster, we invite you to *submit your manuscript as a single PDF file* including all key sections in the different article categories, but without any particular format requirements. Only when your manuscript is at the revision stage, you will be requested to format according to *AMBIO*'s style. This way you will not have to spend valuable research time formatting (or re-formatting) your manuscript prior to first submission to *AMBIO*.
- (3) The volume of Electronic Supplementary Material (ESM) to *AMBIO* articles has grown tremendously during the last 2 years. The ESM offers authors the opportunity to publish material that forms the basis for an article. The ESM is therefore directly relevant to the article, however, the paper must be able to stand alone without it. Examples of typical supplementary materials include questionnaires, specifications of methodology, background data sets, multimedia files, additional illustrations, etc. ESM should not include any preliminary data or analyses. *AMBIO* editors and reviewers currently peer review ESM, but given that most highly qualified researchers are overburdened with review requests and that the printed article should be able to stand alone, we have decided to remove ESM from the peer review process. ESM will be made available to editors and reviewers, but with no request to review it. The cover page of ESM will in the future clearly state this fact. Thus, we have decided to focus editor and reviewer efforts on maintaining the high-quality peer review of papers.
- (4) Submission rates of regular articles have increased almost 15 % during the last year, and the average quality of manuscripts is better than ever. To avoid a situation in which authors will have to wait for extensive periods to see their articles in print, we have decided to publish all *AMBIO* special issues as supplements, starting immediately. We will in other words publish eight regular issues per year and on top of that up to four special issues per year. This way we strive to reduce waiting time between online publishing and in-print publishing of regular articles to less than 6 months.
- (5) The open call for research groups to submit thematic proposals for future special issues continues to be a great success. Articles published in special issues

belong to the most highly cited papers in *AMBIO*, which has been the case for several years. We will make articles in special issues even more visible to the scientific community by introducing a new policy to make open access mandatory. Please submit your proposal for a special issue to appear in *AMBIO* in 2016 before October 1, 2014 when *AMBIO* editors will convene and assess all new proposals simultaneously. If you are interested in submitting a proposal, detailed guidelines on how to proceed are found in instructions for authors. During 2015, you can read thematic articles dealing with (a) climate change effects on natural resources, ecosystem services, biodiversity, and governance, (b) the impact of digital technology on nature conservation, (c) future agriculture with minimized phosphorus losses to waters, (d) Baltic Sea ecosystem-based management.

- (6) Since the inception of the new article category in December 2012, we have accepted 25 *Perspective* articles after peer review. A great success! A *Perspective* provides a forum for authors to discuss topical environmental issues, ideas, or models and

intends to evoke new ideas and stimulate debate. We have slightly revised the description of the *Perspective* article category in instructions for authors to emphasize that (a) it must relate to published research and relevant theoretical/analytical frameworks, (b) if analyses have been undertaken the methodology should be described briefly, (c) the language needs to be objective and balanced.

We welcome your feedback at any time. Please contact me directly using the e-mail below.

REFERENCE

Haddaway, N.R. 2014. Maximizing legacy and impact of primary research: A call for better reporting of results. *AMBIO* 43: 703–706. doi:[10.1007/s13280-014-0535-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-014-0535-6).

Bo Söderström (✉)

Address: The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Box 50005, SE-104 05 Stockholm, Sweden.
e-mail: bo.soderstrom@kva.se