

Building a better future for Diversity & Distributions

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Academic publishers are in an enviable position. Unlike many other branches of the publishing industry, publishers of scientific journals do not have to pay their authors for content. Companies such as Wiley get their content for free. Scientists eagerly submit their years of hard work for publication without expectation to be paid for it. Submission is not a guarantee for publication either, as our work is frequently turned away in favour of other work that is deemed to be more important. Once accepted for publication, our contribution to the publisher's business continues, as our funders must pay the publisher for finalized, typeset manuscripts, either via a publication fee or via a subscription fee. We also freely subsidize the review and editing process by serving as referees and editorial board members, ensuring the quality and originality of published content. Given these circumstances, academic publishers should be attentive to the needs of the scientific community.

Although the scientific community offers a lot to academic publishers, publishers provide a range of invaluable services to scientists. Typesetting, proofreading and copyediting are tedious and difficult tasks that are arguably best accomplished by professionals. Managing the submission, review and editorial processes are similarly time-consuming and difficult. Online submission and manuscript processing platforms (e.g., ScholarOne) are really useful in this regard and are highly valuable to the scientific community.

Given the mutual benefit between publisher and scientist, it is important for both parties to foster a healthy partnership. Throughout most of its 25-year history, *Diversity & Distributions* has epitomized a healthy and productive relationship between scientist and publisher. Since its inception in 1993, the journal has grown enormously, both in size and in scientific impact, and it has served biogeographers and Wiley exceedingly well. However, recent changes in the publishing landscape have generated several

issues that threaten the future of the long-standing partnership between Wiley and biogeography.

In 2019, *Diversity & Distributions* switched its publishing model. Previously, the journal charged readers a subscription fee to access published content. Now it charges authors a publishing fee for freely available content (i.e., "Open Access"). There are benefits and disadvantages to both the publishing models and the scientific community are far from a consensus as to which is best (McGill, Araújo, Franklin, Linder, & Dawson, 2018; Peterson et al., 2019). In this regard, *Diversity & Distributions* is not alone. All scientific journals are now confronted with the dilemma of having to choose the best publishing model to ensure their future success.

In the wake of the shift to an open access publishing model, the editorial board of *Diversity & Distributions* raised several serious concerns with Wiley (Peterson et al., 2019). First, they felt that scientists were not liaised properly before the shift and that the scientific community deserved a stronger voice in this decision. Second, the proposed page charges were deemed to be too expensive. Last, and most alarmingly, many editors believed that their academic freedom was compromised. As a result, the editor-in-chief resigned. Many of the editorial board followed suit and stepped away from their involvement with the Journal.

We believe that the breakdown of the previously successful relationship that underpinned the management of *Diversity & Distributions* is a serious blow to biogeography. The journal is the repository of some of the most significant breakthroughs in conservation biogeography. In many ways, it is the voice of our discipline.

The new senior editorial team has volunteered to help mend this relationship and restore a healthy management structure of *Diversity & Distributions* that benefits both parties. We are strongly aligned with the outgoing editor-in-chief's desire to see the Journal remedy the issues raised at the end of 2018. We also echo her desire to see its continued success extend into the future. We have also discussed

The Incoming Senior Editorial Team: K.C. Burns, Luca Santini & Aibin Zhan.

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these issues at length with the management team at Wiley, who support a series of constructive policy changes to alleviate the concerns raised by the outgoing editors.

First, any major change to the publishing model or to how scientific material is managed will only be implemented after thoroughly consulting the Journal's editors. If necessary, the editorial team will seek the advice of the scientific community at large to insure that we represent our colleague's opinions accurately. Second, Wiley will insure that authors who cannot afford the open access fee will receive a fee waiver to publish in *Diversity & Distributions*. Third, all publishing decisions regarding all submitted materials will be at the sole discretion of the editorial team and the reviewers they appoint.

We hope that practicing conservationists and biogeographers share our desire to see *Diversity & Distributions* flourish in the future. We also hope the scientific community recognizes the expert and much-needed services provided by Wiley, not just for *Diversity & Distributions* but for all of the biogeography journals they help us publish. On the other hand, the newly appointed editorial team also supports those editors who stepped down from their editorial roles to insure that the voices of practicing biogeographers are heard. We trust that Wiley will uphold their assurances to the scientific community and we hope that the newly forged relationship between scientist and publisher will be strong enough to avoid the same circumstance from repeating in the future.

Finally, the new senior editorial team, together with the journal management team at Wiley, would like to thank David Richardson and Janet Franklin, the founding and most recent chief editors, for their invaluable contributions to the academic growth of *Diversity & Distributions* over the past 25 years. We also thank all associate editors, past and present, for their hard work to ensure the

exceptional quality of work published in *Diversity & Distributions*. Lastly, we would also like to thank all authors for submitting their valuable work to the journal. We sincerely hope that all parties will continue to work together to build a better future for *Diversity & Distributions*.

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