

Report of the IAVS Publications Committee: 2018-2019

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1. Publications Committee

The IAVS Publications Committee currently consists of Peter Minchin, Chair (US), Bob Peet (US), Hans Henrik Bruun (DK), Jessica Gurevitch (US), Tomáš Herben (CZ), Michael Manthey (DE), Norman Mason (NZ), Laco Mucina (AU), and Martin Zobel (EE).

2. State of the Journals

Both the *Journal of Vegetation Science* (JVS) and *Applied Vegetation Science* (AVS) continue to do well. Extensive data on circulation and sales, readership, article downloads, content management, impact metrics, and several other topics are given in the 2018 Publisher's Report.

Availability

The total number of institutions that purchased a license for JVS and AVS increased substantially, from 5,573 in 2017 to 6,316 in 2018 (an increase of 13%). As in 2017, the majority of institutions purchased a Wiley license, which gives access to a range of Wiley titles, rather than a traditional subscription. There was also an increase in the number of institutions accessing our journals through an EBSCO subscription, from 1,578 in 2017 to 1,678 in 2018 (an increase of 6.3%).

In 2018, Wiley's philanthropic initiatives gave low-cost or free access to current content in JVS and AVS to 7,911 institutions in developing countries. This represents a 3.2% increase from 2017 (7,669 institutions). We are happy that Wiley's generosity allows so many of our colleagues and their students in the developing world have access to our journals.

Institutional and individual print subscriptions continued to decline in 2018 and the average print run currently stands at approximately 114 copies per issue for both JVS and AVS. These numbers are still high enough that Wiley will continue to offer print as an option for at least the next few years.

Authorship & Readership

Our journals continue to be highly international in both authorship and readership. The 106 articles published in JVS in 2018 had corresponding authors from 29 countries, with the largest numbers being from the US (32), Australia (9), Canada (8), Germany (7), South Africa (7), and Sweden (7). The 63 AVS articles published in 2018 had corresponding authors from 25 countries, with the highest numbers from the US (14), France (7), Czech Republic (6), Germany (6), and Spain (5).

The international nature of our readership is shown by the statistics for article downloads and online traffic by country. The top ten countries for online downloads of JVS in 2018 were US, China, Germany, UK, Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Spain, and Czech Republic. For AVS, the top ten countries for downloads in 2018 were US, China, Germany, UK, Australia, Brazil, France, Canada, Italy, and Spain. In 2018, the number of article downloads from Wiley Online Library, EBSCO, and other third-party databases (e.g. JSTOR), remained similar to 2017 levels for both JVS (c. 180,000) and AVS (c. 69,000). The average increase in downloads from 2017 to 2018 across all Wiley journals in the Ecology subject area was 11.8%. We will work with Wiley to determine strategies to increase growth in downloads of articles from our journals.

**Revenue**

For JVS, the total net revenue received by IAVS from Wiley in 2018 was £122,248, which is an 8% decrease from 2017 (£ 132,818). Net revenue for AVS in 2018 was £23,365, which is a 13% increase over 2017 (£ 20,662). Revenue received from our journals continues to be the major source of income for IAVS.

Impact Factors

The 2-year IF for 2018 was 2.944 for JVS and 3.568 for AVS. These are both increases from the corresponding 2017 values. The big jump in IF for AVS was influenced by a large number of citations of the Mucina *et al.* paper on the vegetation of Europe and we expect to see a decline in IF once the 2 year citation window for this paper is passed. In 2018, JVS had a 5-year IF of 3.392 and AVS had a 5-year IF of 3.022.

Production time

In 2018, average days from receipt of a final manuscript to print publication dropped by 2 days for JVS and increased by 19 days for AVS, compared to 2017 values. With the move in March 2019 of the Editorial Office for JVS and AVS from the outsourced company Editorial Office Ltd. to in-house production in Wiley, we anticipate that increased efficiencies will lead to drops in handling and production time for our journals. Under the new arrangements, Wiley has committed to maintain the average number of days between the receipt of final versions of accepted papers at Wiley to Early View publication at 27-30 days, which is about half the current time.

Journal of Vegetation Science

Year	Volume	Number of Issues	Number of pages	Number of articles	Average days from receipt at Wiley to Early View publication	Average days from receipt at Wiley to print publication
2018	29	6	1085	106	52	131
2017	28	6	1266	121	52	133
2016	27	6	1323	130	51	146
2015	26	6	1234	119	40	153
2014	25	6	1509	145	40	226

Applied Vegetation Science

Year	Volume	Number of Issues	Number of pages	Number of articles	Average days from receipt at Wiley to Early View publication	Average days from receipt at Wiley to print publication
2018	21	4	732	63	55	164
2017	20	4	718	66	51	145
2016	19	4	1010	74	54	143
2015	18	4	738	73	48	163
2014	17	4	796	75	43	202

3. Partnership with Wiley**New Publisher – Carol Clark**

Our relationship with Wiley remains excellent. In 2018, Wiley assigned us a new Publisher, Carol Clark (caclark@wiley.com). Carol is the main point of contact for the Chief Editors, Vice President for Publications and other IAVS officers. She oversees the running of the IAVS journals, including finance, ethics, policy and online product development. We have an excellent working relationship with Carol. The Vice President for Publications and Chief Editors meet regularly with her via Skype.



Strategy Meeting

On 14 December 2018, the Chief Editors (Milan Chytrý, Alessandro Chiarucci, Meelis Pärtel, and Valerio Pillar) and the Vice President for Publications (Peter Minchin) attended a 1-day Strategy Meeting at the Wiley offices in Oxford, UK. The purpose of the meeting was to refine the overall vision, goals, and shorter-term objectives for JVS and AVS. Four areas were identified as crucial for success:

1. **Increasing Output.** Attract more high-quality submissions by targeted marketing. Increase discoverability and hence readership of our journals and citations of their papers. Attract Editorial Board members from areas such as China, Central America, and South America. Also increase author representation from these areas.
2. **Improving Efficiency.** Move our journals to an in-house Wiley editorial office (this was done from March, 2019). Improve author experience by simplifying the submission format, reducing reviewing and publication times. The aim is to reduce production time to an average of no more than 30 days.
3. **Engaging with Open Research.** Explore ways to transition JVS and AVS from the current subscription model to full Open Access in the medium-term future.
4. **Diversifying Revenue.** Help increase membership, authorship, and readership in key emerging areas, such as China.

Move to In-house Editorial Office

Following the Strategy Day, it was agreed to transfer the Editorial Office for JVS and AVS from an outsourced company (Editorial Office Ltd.) to an in-house facility at the Wiley offices in Oxford. This was done in March, 2019. Decision letter templates have been revised and the manuscript handling workflow altered to use the automatic procedures available in the Scholar One system. The goal is to significantly reduce the time taken in all stages of manuscript handling (reviewing, revision, production, and publication). The Chief Editors are working with Sarah Bremner in the Wiley editorial office to maximize the efficiency of the process.

Open Access

The publication landscape is changing, with a move away from the traditional subscription-based funding of journals towards Open Access (OA) publishing, where funding is primarily from Article Publication Charges (APCs) paid up-front. The advantage of OA is that published articles are freely available to all, not just to those whose institutions can afford subscriptions. The challenge is to set levels of APCs and establish mechanisms for funding APCs (e.g. by institutions or research funding bodies), so that authors can afford to publish their work. The incoming Governing Board and Publications Committee will need to carefully consider how JVS and AVS may eventually transition to OA.

Renewal of the IAVS contract with Wiley

The current publishing contract with Wiley is due to be renewed in 2020. It will be a major task of the incoming IAVS Governing Board and Publications Committee to negotiate a new contract that best serves our interests.

4. Other IAVS-related Publications and Issues

IAVS Bulletin

Monika Janišová, has continued to do a great job as editor of the IAVS Bulletin. The Bulletin is e-mailed directly to IAVS members and also made available through the IAVS website. Over the past year, there have been delays in publication due to increased production time by FASEB. The incoming Governing Board will need to explore ways to overcome these problems.



Future of Phytocoenologia

Phytocoenologia has been published since 1973 by Schweizerbart and Borntraeger science publishers “in collaboration with the International Association for Vegetation Science”. Since 2014, publication has been under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Schweizerbart and Borntraeger and IAVS. Over the past several years there has been increasing dissatisfaction with the service provided by Schweizerbart and Borntraeger. Subscription prices are high and many libraries have cancelled their subscriptions. Despite the MoU, substantial discounts have not been given to IAVS members. The editorial software system is archaic and inefficient and many errors are made, which inflates handling times and times to publication. Open Access articles are not flagged as such in databases such as Scopus. Schweizerbart and Borntraeger has been unresponsive to advice and requests from the Chief Editors and there has been no progress in addressing these problems.

At the 2018 annual meeting in Bozeman, IAVS Council unanimously approved the following resolution:

“... the Council authorize the Governing Board to work with the Phytocoenologia editors to take actions including discussion with Wiley and Borntraeger regarding these issues and then report back to Council. If there are major financial implications the Governing Board will report back to Council and allow two weeks for approval of any expenditure.”

In January, 2019 Martin Diekmann received legal advice that the name, copyright, and past content of Phytocoenologia is most likely owned by Schweizerbart and Borntraeger, so that if IAVS wanted to move the journal to a new publisher and retain the name and access to past content, it would need to negotiate a purchase from Schweizerbart and Borntraeger.

Wiley, publisher of JVS and AVS, confirmed at the strategy meeting in December 2018 that it has no interest in publishing a journal to replace Phytocoenologia but has given IAVS permission to pursue other means of having it published. In February 2019, the Chief Editors of Phytocoenologia contacted Pensoft, which publishes many online journals. Pensoft expressed great interest in becoming the publisher of Phytocoenologia (or a new journal with a similar scope and probably the same editors) as a totally Open Access journal. Printed copies could be purchased on request. Various models for setting the Article Publication Charge (APC) are available and IAVS would be able to devise a system that should make publication in the journal accessible to all our members.

Following discussions between the Chief Editors of Phytocoenologia and the IAVS Governing Board, an e-mail was sent to Dr. Nägele of Schweizerbart and Borntraeger in February, 2019 informing him of the intention to seek a different publisher. His response was very defensive and did not acknowledge the ongoing problems, let alone suggest ways of overcoming them. The IAVS Governing Board voted to cancel the MoU with Schweizerbart and Borntraeger and Martin Diekmann has informed Dr. Nägele that the MoU is cancelled. The Chief Editors of Phytocoenologia have informed Dr. Nägele that they will cease reviewing articles for Phytocoenologia beyond the 2019 volume.

On 17 June, 2019, the IAVS Governing Board and Publications Committee asked IAVS Council vote via an online survey on the following three-part proposal:

- That IAVS is authorized to contract with Pensoft to publish a new Open Access journal similar in scope to Phytocoenologia and with a working title of Vegetation Classification and Survey.
- That the IAVS Publications Committee, in collaboration with the Chief Editors of the new Open Access journal is authorized to draw up a schedule of Article Publication Charges (APCs) that will raise the annual fee of 3000 EUR plus the 650 EUR per article charged by Pensoft and provide a modest annual profit to IAVS, while providing discounts to IAVS members, those from low-income countries or those who are in financial hardship, and



members of the editorial team for the new journal. The Publications Committee and Chief Editors would be free to devise whatever schedule of APCs they considered appropriate.

- That the IAVS Governing Board is authorized to pay Pensoft the once-off start-up fee of 3000 EUR, together with any shortfall in fees for the first two years of operation of the new journal, to a maximum of 15,000 EUR per year. Though the schedule of APCs will be designed to cover all fees, there may be a transition period as the new journal becomes established during which some financial help from IAVS may be needed.

The result of the vote was as follows: 36 of the 42 current members of Council voted, with 32 approving the proposal, 1 opposing it, and 3 abstaining. **The proposal was therefore approved by a large majority (76% of Council membership) and so publication of the new Open Access journal with Pensoft will begin as soon as possible.** The incoming Governing Board and Publications Committee will need to work closely with the Chief Editors of the new journal to finalize a name for the journal and determine a suitable schedule of APCs. Reviewing of papers for the new journal will proceed, with a view to having the first volume published in 2020.