

Twentieth year of the *Journal of Vegetation Science*: the journal for all vegetation scientists

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The *Journal of Vegetation Science* 20 years on

The *Journal of Vegetation Science* was launched by the International Association for Vegetation Science (IAVS) in 1990, specifically to be a journal owned and governed by the Association. Now, in its 20th year of publication, it is the reference journal for plant community ecology. Eddy van der Maarel concluded in his editorial of the first issue: “*Vegetation science is rapidly developing towards a general science of plant communities with its own body of theory and an enormous potential for application in the fields of nature conservation and environmental management. . . . Let the Journal of Vegetation Science be a journal for all vegetation scientists*” (van der Maarel 1990).

The world has changed much in those 19 years. So has vegetation science, with the *Journal of Vegetation Science* drawing together vegetation scientists from almost all the countries of the world and with every approach to the subject.

Peter White had been with the *Journal of Vegetation Science* since it started. He had been an Associate Editor since they existed, and a Chief Editor since they did. He is now taking a break¹ from the Journal, primarily because he is overseeing developments in the North Carolina Botanic Garden. This is a good time to thank him for all his work and all his wisdom since 1990.

Publishing Developments

The *Journal of Vegetation Science* has been published by the small publishing house Opulus Press of Sweden. They started ahead of other publishers in their use of computers to speed up editing and publishing. We thank them for giving the journal such an excellent start, for the very professional work they did for the first 19 years of the Journal.

Since early 2007, the Association has been searching for the publisher that would best meet the

Journal's needs in the future, and has awarded the contract for 2009 onwards to Wiley-Blackwell Publishing who, as Blackwell Publishing, have had a long history of publishing society journals.

These days, libraries buy packages of journals. Being with a large publisher will give the IAVS journals wider circulation, give IAVS more reliable income, and ensure that the journals can keep up with the rapidly-changing world of electronic publishing. All the signs are that we can retain the personal touch that we so much appreciated with Opulus. We shall also be able, for the first time, to offer a tangible aspect to the Editors' Award, and we are very grateful to Wiley-Blackwell for this. IAVS has always been concerned with those in poorer countries, and Wiley-Blackwell are active in several programmes that offer free electronic access to those in such countries. We believe arrangement with Wiley-Blackwell will be beneficial for readers, authors and all those involved with the Journal.

In the interim, there have been considerable delays in the changeover between publishers. These will not affect our readers, but we apologise to all those authors caught up in this. Anyone who has submitted an ms in the period August-October and is concerned as to its status is welcome to contact Gill Smith at our new office, jvsci@editorialoffice.co.uk, but we are confident of the good service that we can provide from now on.

Editors' Award for 2008

A clear direction in ecology in the past decade has been to describe communities not so much in terms of species identities as in terms of their texture/traits/functional-types (Wilson et al. 1994; Lavorel et al. 1997; Díaz & Cabido 2001; McGill et al. 2006). The approach can be traced to Barkman (1979), but was given impetus by the need to consider the response of vegetation to climatic change

¹We trust and hope it will only be a break.

without experimenting on all the world's 250 000–400 000 higher plant species. The *Journal of Vegetation Science* has been the leading journal in the texture/traits/functional-types field.

A constant problem is whether the traits should be measured in the field, or in controlled, greenhouse conditions. Field measurements are more realistic of the plants as they respond to the environment and to each other. However, greenhouse measurements are often easier, especially for root traits, and they evaluate the species in standard conditions giving values unaffected by the plastic responses to environments and communities.

Mokany & Ash (2008) take the view that the relevant trait values are those expressed in the field, but they ask how much difference there is anyway. Their work is more comprehensive than any before in that they include two greenhouse treatments – low and high fertility – and they examine not one or two traits but 17. The results, as so often in community ecology, are mixed. For example, the leaf area of plants in the field was about half those grown in the greenhouse, yet the two were highly correlated across plant species ($r_s = 0.86$ for low fertility and 0.83 for high fertility). Plants in the field had less hairy leaves, and correlation of field *v.* greenhouse was poor ($r_s = 0.62$ and 0.57). Leaf weight ratio was more poorly correlated still ($r_s = 0.17$ and 0.02). Correlations between the two greenhouse fertility levels were higher; among traits not directly related to plant size, r_s ranged down to 0.78 for root/shoot quotient. The results tell us that growing conditions in the greenhouse are not crucial, but some of the traits measured there will be different from those that operate in the field, and not consistently different across species.

Mokany & Ash receive the Editors' Award for 2008. As in the past, these authors will each receive a certificate and their paper will be listed on the Journal's web site. In addition, due to the generosity of our new publishers, the first author will be able to choose Wiley-Blackwell books up to the value of £ 100.

The runner-up paper was Startsev et al. (2008). Mosses are important members of forest communities, in terms of composition and function (Cornelissen et al. 2007). Litter tends to fall off acrocarpous mosses, but pleurocarpous species are more affected. Startsev and colleagues separated by experiments the effects via litter shading, via the leaching of inhibitory phenolics and via promotion of growth by leached sugars. All these effects were present. The *Journal of Vegetation Science* especially welcomes papers that use experiments to understand vegetation processes.

We try to keep the journal focussed on vegetation, so we do not normally accept one-species papers. However, we make an exception when the species has a particular impact on the whole community, when it is seen in a community context, or where we believe it will be of particular interest to vegetation scientists. The study of Drezner & Balling (2008) is on *Carnegiea gigantea* (the Saguaro Cactus), a keystone species. The authors estimated the age structure of *C. gigantea* populations via an age-height relation, and compared this to estimates of atmospheric volcano-derived dust. It turned out that worldwide volcanic activity influences *C. gigantea* regeneration: interception of sunlight leads to mild winters and higher pre-monsoon rainfall, which facilitate establishment of seedlings and their survival. Those correlative studies are especially welcome that shed light on vegetation functioning.

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