

## Editorial

# Publication turn around times - why does it take so long?



JMATE has been undergoing some major staff changes and re-structuring that we hope will streamline and facilitate timely handling of article submissions

and getting issues out. To that end we will begin to open an issue on schedule and immediately add manuscripts as they are ready, instead of waiting for a complete issue before releasing all. There have been an intolerable delays for some authors - for which I personally apologize and it is hoped that this new system resolves such issues.

That said, there are things that authors can do to ensure their manuscript gets into the system for proper peer review in a timely manner. Our staff vets all submissions and if readability is a problem or instructions to authors were not followed it will slow the review process as the submission will be returned to the authors for the problems to be addressed prior to any external review. For those submitting whose first language is not English, having your paper reviewed professionally for its sentence structure and proper use of the language prior to your sending it to the journal would be a time saver. As well, for clarity of message, having a colleague read your paper to see if they understand its purpose, findings and implications, will increase your chances of success. Specifically, the actual content of the manuscript is key. Your goal as authors should be to ensure there is a clear goal and message in the paper so all readers, be they scientists, citizen scientists or even lay public, can understand it. If your paper lacks focus and no message is identifiable, the informative value of the paper is lost - making its publication value much less. By ensuring that this is strong prior to your sending it to us for consideration goes a long way to optimize an expeditious favorable outcome.

References are another area that authors seem to not spend much time with in their submissions. Incomplete or incorrect formatting once again leads to delays, which can easily be avoided by just ensuring the JMATE Instructions to Authors are followed. Trying to save time by cutting and pasting references from other journals adds only to further delays. This area has become so arduous for our editorial staff that we now will not review a submission until this is addressed. It bears mentioning that JMATE does not charge to submit or publish a paper and all our staff are volunteers. We hope the authors can appreciate this and do their part by ensuring accuracy and compliance to style which will minimize any hold-up to the review and revision process.

Providing a suggested list of external reviewers, who are acknowledged experts in the field of the manuscript, with their contact information and sending the copyright forms signed by all authors also saves time. The journal will not proceed without these items and others that are clearly listed on a checklist under JMATE Instructions to Authors. There is no advantage to list post docs or other trainees, family or close relatives as reviewers, as all names are vetted. Once again, if not appropriate, others will be selected or you will be asked to provide proper information - all delaying the review process.

The critical role external reviewers play in this process cannot be stressed enough. There is no doubt that everyone is over committed and the time needed to do a solid review of a paper is often an added burden. However, at the very least, we appreciate a swift response by any reviewer we approach indicating whether or not they are willing and able to do such a review. Then if the commitment was made to provide a constructive review, doing it in a timely manner is also of great assistance. The entire quality of any journal is completely dependent on the

## **Editorial Cont'd**

reviewers. All of us working to maintain a high standard of excellence of our respective journals truly appreciate those that agree to share their wisdom and precious time to help in this critical process.

Even once the submission is revised and accepted, delays can occur that significantly impact publication times. For example, if authors do not send their figures in adequate quality or the appropriate formatting - galleys cannot be completed, requiring a back and forth communication until the issues are resolved, further delaying publication. Finally often authors do not realize that at the galley stage major changes cannot be considered as it affects spacing and pagination for all the other articles and such corrections should have been done during the draft resubmission phases.

As can be seen, the advancement of our understanding of marine mammals via the print medium is a team effort, and all play their role to contribute to the best possible information shared. The authors for their creative and unique perspectives, the reviewers for their constructive suggestions which serve to improve this, the journals that take the time to co-ordinate this venture and then the editorial staff without whose work the papers would just be thoughts on an i-pad or word file!

Clearly our understanding and appreciation of marine animals and their ecology cannot advance without the sharing of your ideas and findings and JMATE looks forward to continuing to do its part in assisting you in that endeavor.

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