

Chapter 9. Journal Procedures

This chapter gives an overview of current practices in the review, handling, and production of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA journals. Additional details and supplementary information are available from the headquarters office.

AGRONOMY JOURNAL

Agronomy Journal (AJ) is published six times a year by ASA. The editorial board consists of the editor, technical editors, associate editors, the editor-in-chief of ASA, the managing editor, the publications director, and the chief executive officer.

Scope

After critical review and approval by the editorial board, AJ publishes articles reporting research findings in soil–plant relationships; crop science; soil science; biometry; crop, soil, pasture, and range management; crop, forage, and pasture production and utilization; turfgrass; agroclimatology; agronomic modeling; statistics; integrated pest management; production agriculture; and integrated agricultural systems. See a recent issue of AJ for the specific Table of Contents topics.

Notes are published about apparatus, observations, and experimental techniques. Observations usually are limited to studies and reports of unrepeatable phenomena or other unique circumstances. Review and interpretation papers may be published subject to review. Reviews invited by the editor may have publication fees waived. Contributions to the Forum section deal with current agronomic issues and questions, in brief, thought-provoking form. Such papers are reviewed by the editor in consultation with the editorial board.

The Software section of AJ includes papers related to computing in agronomy. Papers may focus on measurement or analysis software, monitoring and control software, visualization, specialized databases and data structures, computer utilities for agronomists, comparisons of algorithms or programs, and decision support systems. Software manuscripts may be submitted as articles, Letters to the Editor, Notes, or Forum papers. Detailed guidelines are in Appendix C.

Articles should make a significant contribution to the advancement of knowledge or toward a better understanding of existing agronomic concepts. The study reported must be of potential interest to a significant number of scientists and, if specific to a local situation, must be relevant to a wide body of knowledge in agronomy. Papers dealing with production may necessarily be specific to a region or state.

Manuscript Handling

General Procedures

See Anonymous Review in Chapter 1 for information on special preparation required for submitting papers to AJ. Papers not prepared according to this format will be returned to authors for revision before the paper will be reviewed.

Manuscripts should be submitted to the journal via the online submission system at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/agron>. (For further details, see Chapter 1 and the instructions to authors, <https://dl.sciencesocieties.org/publications/aj/instructions-to-authors>.) After the manuscript is logged in, the corresponding author receives email notification that the review process has begun. The manuscript number must be used in all correspondence regarding the manuscript. The editor assigns the manuscript to a technical editor on the basis of the subject matter. The technical editor, in turn, assigns properly prepared manuscripts to

an associate editor, who obtains a minimum of two reviews. Associate editors notify authors when a manuscript is accepted; technical editors notify authors when a manuscript is released.

If the reviewers recommend publication without change and the associate editor agrees, the manuscript and reviewer reports are sent to the technical editor with that recommendation. If the technical editor agrees, he or she accepts the manuscript.

If at least one of the reviewers and the associate editor find that the manuscript could probably be published after revision, the associate editor normally works with the author to obtain a satisfactory revision of the manuscript and then, as above, returns it to the technical editor with a recommendation for acceptance.

If at least one of the reviewers and associate editor recommend that a manuscript be rejected, the manuscript and reviewers' comments are sent to the technical editor. If the technical editor agrees with that recommendation, he or she releases the manuscript to the author.

If a manuscript returned to an author for revision is not returned within 28 d, it is subject to release by the technical editor.

Manuscripts released may, after revision, be resubmitted to the same or another ASA, CSSA, or SSSA journal.

Appeals of decisions by the editorial board are handled by the editor. See also the "Policy for Appeal of Manuscript Review" at the end of this chapter.

Preparation of Papers for Publication

Accepted manuscripts are edited and prepared for printing by a professional copy-editor, who will contact the author concerning any editorial problems and will assist the author in the presentation of all tables and figures that accompany the text of the paper.

Electronic proofs are sent to the authors. (See Chapter 11 for more guidelines on proofreading.) Authors should proof the PDF proofs and return them to ASA, CSSA, SSSA headquarters within 3 days of receipt.

Shortly after the corrections are made to the proofs, the electronic manuscript is posted to the journal Website.

The production and publication of reprints is managed by the headquarters office staff. About 6 weeks are required from publication of the journal to shipment of reprints.

NATURAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

Natural Sciences Education (NSE) is published continuously in electronic form by the ASA (as soon as a manuscript is accepted, edited, and processed, it is published at <http://www.agronomy.org/publications/nse>). All manuscripts published online during a given year are combined into a volume for that year. Before 1998, the journal was published only in hard-copy format twice a year.

Cooperators in the publishing of NSE are the Agricultural & Applied Economics Association, American Association for Agricultural Education, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, the American Phytopathological Society, the American Society for Horticultural Science, the American Society of Animal Science, the American Society of Plant Biologists, CSSA, the Ecological Society of America, the Entomological Society of America, and SSSA.

The editorial board consists of the editor, associate editors, the editor-in-chief of ASA, the managing editor, the publications director, and the chief executive officer.

Scope

The journal accepts reports of original studies pertaining to concepts of resident, extension, industrial, and K–16 education in the life sciences, natural resources, and agriculture. Reviews or digests of a comprehensive and well-defined scope are acceptable. The journal also prints notes; articles describing Power Point presentations, computer software, and decision case studies; news features; profiles; media reviews; editorials; and letters to the editor. Articles may confirm and strengthen the findings of others, revise established ideas or practices, or challenge accepted theory, providing that the evidence presented is significant and convincing. Manuscripts based mainly on personal philosophy or opinion are acceptable if they conform to the above criteria.

Manuscript Handling

Manuscripts intended for NSE must be prepared according to the instructions in this manual. For decision case studies, Power Point presentations, and software papers, see Appendix C for detailed guidelines. Manuscripts should be submitted to the journal via the online submission system at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/nse>. (For further details, see Chapter 1 and the online instructions to authors.) After the manuscript is logged in, the corresponding author receives email notification that the review process has begun. The manuscript number must be used in all correspondence regarding the manuscript. The editor assigns the manuscript to an associate editor, who obtains a minimum of two reviews. The duties of the editorial board and the remaining steps toward publication are similar to those for AJ, except that associate editors make their recommendations for acceptance or release to the journal's editor.

Appeals of decisions are handled by the editor. See also the "Policy for Appeal of Manuscript Review" at the end of this chapter.

JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Journal of Environmental Quality (JEQ) is published by ASA, CSSA, and SSSA. Since 1994, it has been published bimonthly; prior to that (1972–1993), it was published quarterly. The JEQ editorial board consists of the editor, technical editors, associate editors, the editors-in-chief of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, the managing editor, the publications director, and the chief executive officer.

Scope

The journal publishes contributions under the headings of (i) Technical Reports, (ii) Reviews and Analyses, (iii) Environmental Issues, (iv) Short Communications, (v) Dataset Papers, (vi) Special Sections, (vii) Letters to the Editor, and (viii) Book Reviews.

Papers in JEQ cover various aspects of anthropogenic impacts on the environment, including terrestrial, atmospheric, and aquatic systems. Emphasis is given to the understanding of underlying processes rather than to monitoring.

Technical reports published in JEQ are grouped by subject matter. The subject areas are periodically reviewed by the JEQ editorial board and are subject to change. The subject matter areas include atmospheric pollutants and trace gases, biodegradation and bioremediation, environmental microbiology, environmental models, modules, and datasets, groundwater quality, heavy metals in the environment, landscape and watershed processes, organic compounds in the environment, plant and environment interactions, surface water quality, urban pollutants, urban pollution, vadose zone processes and chemical transport, waste management, and wetland and aquatic processes.

The journal also frequently highlights topics in special sections.

Upon submission, manuscript authors are given the opportunity to designate a subject matter headings under which the article could logically appear.

Contributions reporting original research or brief reviews and analyses dealing with some aspect of environmental quality in natural and agricultural ecosystems are accepted from all disciplines for consideration by the editorial board. Manuscripts may be volunteered, invited, or coordinated as a symposium. Acceptance of a group of symposium manuscripts for collective publication is limited to one such group per issue. Book reviews may be invited by the editor.

Manuscript Handling

Contributions to JEQ should be submitted to the journal via the online submission system at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jeq>. See the instructions to authors (<https://dl.sciencesocieties.org/publications/jeq/author-instructions>) for further details.

The editor notifies the corresponding author of receipt of the manuscript and assigns it a manuscript number that must be used in all correspondence regarding the manuscript. The editor assigns each manuscript to the technical editor supervising the subject area in which the paper will be reviewed. The remaining procedures are essentially the same as described for AJ.

Manuscripts sent to an author for revision and not returned within 30 d is subject to release by the editor. Papers released in this manner may be resubmitted to JEQ as a new manuscript. Appeals of decisions by the editorial board are handled by the editor. See also the "Policy for Appeal of Manuscript Review" at the end of this chapter.

CROP SCIENCE

Crop Science (CS), published bimonthly, is the official publication of CSSA. The publication is prepared by an editorial board consisting of the editor, technical editors, associate editors, the editor-in-chief of CSSA, the managing editor, the publications director, and the chief executive officer.

Scope

Crop Science publishes scientific papers in crop breeding, genetics, and cytology; crop physiology and metabolism; crop ecology, management, and quality; seed physiology, production, and technology; forage and grazing lands; plant genetic resources; turf-grass science; biomedical, health beneficial, and nutritionally enhanced plants; and genomics, molecular genetics, and biotechnology.

The journal publishes original research, review and interpretation, and perspectives papers in all the above subject matters, as well as book reviews, notes, and letters to the editor.

Manuscript Handling

Contributions to CS should be submitted via the online submission system at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/crop>. See the instructions to authors (dl.sciencesocieties.org/publications/authors) for further details.

All papers, whether invited or volunteered, are subject to review. The rest of the procedures and responsibilities of editorial board members are similar to those of AJ, except that two of the groups of associate editors have the authority to accept and release papers, and the time allowed by CS for author revision is 30 days for minor revisions and 60 days for major revisions. Appeals of decisions by the editorial board are handled by the editor. See also the "Policy for Appeal of Manuscript Review" at the end of this chapter.

JOURNAL OF PLANT REGISTRATIONS

Journal of Plant Registrations (JPR), published three times a year, is the official registration publication of CSSA. The publication is prepared by an editorial board consisting of the editor, associate editors, the editor-in-chief of CSSA, the managing editor, the publications director, and the chief executive officer.

Journal of Plant Registrations publishes cultivar, germplasm, parental line, genetic stock, and mapping population registration manuscripts.

Manuscript Handling

Manuscripts should be submitted to JPR through the online submission program at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/plantreg>. Detailed instructions can be found at the site.

Instructions to authors of manuscripts can be found at <https://dl.sciencesocieties.org/publications/jpr/author-instructions>. All papers, whether invited or volunteered, are subject to review. Additional details on requirements for articles are available on the JPR Website. Appeals of decisions by the editorial board are handled by the editor. See also the "Policy for Appeal of Manuscript Review" at the end of this chapter.

THE PLANT GENOME

The Plant Genome (TPG) is an open-access, electronic journal published three times per year by CSSA. The publication is prepared by an editorial board consisting of the editor, associate editors, the editor-in-chief of CSSA, the managing editor, the publications director, and the chief executive officer.

Scope

The Plant Genome publishes original research investigating all aspects of plant genomics. Technical breakthroughs reporting improvements in the efficiency and speed of acquiring and interpreting plant genomics data are welcome. The editorial board gives preference to novel reports that use innovative genomic applications that advance our understanding of plant biology that may have applications to crop improvement. The journal also publishes invited review articles and perspectives that offer insight and commentary on recent advances in genomics and their potential for agronomic improvement.

Manuscript Handling

Contributions to TPG should be submitted via the online submission system at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/plantgenome>. See the instructions to authors (dl.sciencesocieties.org/publications/authors) for further details.

All papers, whether invited or volunteered, are subject to review. Additional details on requirements for articles are available on the Website. Appeals of decisions by the editorial board are handled by the editor. See also the "Policy for Appeal of Manuscript Review" at the end of this chapter.

SOIL SCIENCE SOCIETY OF AMERICA JOURNAL

Soil Science Society of America Journal (SSSAJ) is published bimonthly and is the official publication of SSSA. The editorial board consists of the editor, technical editors, associate editors, the editor-in-chief of SSSA, the managing editor, the publications director, and the chief executive officer.

Scope

The journal publishes (i) papers and notes on original research and (ii) comments and letters to the editor containing critical comments on papers published in one of the society outlets or elsewhere, editorial comments or comments by society officers, or personal comments on matters having to do with soil science.

Upon invitation of the technical editors, short critical reviews or essays on timely subjects may be published on a limited basis. Under certain circumstances and with approval of the technical editors, symposium papers may also be published in SSSAJ. Ideas for symposia can be submitted to the editor.

Manuscript Handling

See Anonymous Review in Chapter 1 for information on special preparations required for submitting papers to SSSAJ. Papers not prepared according to this format will be returned to authors for revision before the paper will be reviewed.

Contributions to SSSAJ should be submitted via the online submission system at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/sssaj>. For further details, see the instructions to authors (<http://www.soils.org/files/publications/sssaj-author-instructions-2008.pdf>). The editor notifies the corresponding author of receipt of the manuscript and assigns it a manuscript number that must be used in all correspondence regarding the manuscript. The editor assigns each manuscript to the technical editor supervising the division in which the paper will be reviewed. The technical editor will assign the manuscript to an associate editor according to field of specialization. The remaining steps are essentially the same as those described for AJ, except that associate editors have the authority to accept manuscripts for publication. Manuscripts judged to be unsuitable for publication are referred back to the technical editor, who makes the final decision to release these manuscripts. Authors of such manuscripts should contact the editor if they wish to appeal the decision. See also the "Policy for Appeal of Manuscript Review" at the end of this chapter.

VADOSE ZONE JOURNAL

Vadose Zone Journal (VZJ) is published quarterly by SSSA. The editorial board consists of the editor, co-editors, associate editors, the editor-in-chief of SSSA, the managing editor, the publications director, and the chief executive officer. Geological Society of America is a journal cooperator.

Scope

Vadose Zone Journal is an outlet for interdisciplinary research and assessment of the vadose zone, the mostly unsaturated zone between the soil surface and the permanent groundwater table. The scientific community has an increasing need for effective dissemination of information about the physical, chemical, and biological processes operating in this zone. The journal publishes contributions in the following categories: Reviews and Analyses, Original Research, Data and Data Analyses, Notes, Comments, Letters to the Editor, and Book Reviews. The journal also frequently highlights topics in Special Sections.

The vadose zone has long been the focus of research and assessment by scientists concerned with soil water flow and the fate and transport of chemicals stemming from agricultural practices or waste disposal operations. Many industrial, municipal, and engineering activities are now also known to have an impact on the vadose zone, and hence indirectly all of the subsurface environment. As a result, many state and federal agencies are increasingly addressing vadose zone issues. The vadose zone is an active domain of

scientists and professionals in a broad range of disciplines, including soil physics, geophysics, hydrogeology, geochemistry, soil chemistry, microbiology, terrestrial ecology, environmental engineering, agricultural engineering, and engineering associated with construction, petroleum, and chemical technologies.

Vadose Zone Journal reports fundamental and applied research from disciplinary and multidisciplinary investigations, including assessment and policy analyses of single- and multi-issue concerns involving the vadose zone, with the goal of disseminating information to facilitate science-based decision making and sustainable management of the vadose zone. Examples of topic areas suitable for VZJ are variably saturated fluid flow, heat and solute transport in granular and fractured media, flow processes in the capillary fringe at or near the water table, water table management, regional and global climate change impacts on the vadose zone, carbon sequestration, design and performance of waste disposal facilities, biogeochemical transformation processes, microbial processes in shallow and deep formations, bioremediation, and the fate and transport of radionuclides, inorganic and organic chemicals, colloids, viruses and microorganisms. The journal also addresses yet-to-be-resolved issues, such as how to quantify heterogeneity of subsurface processes and properties, and how to couple physical, chemical, and biological processes across a range of spatial scales from the molecular to the global.

Manuscript Handling

Contributions to VZJ should be submitted via the online submission system at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/vzj>. The editor or a co-editor assigns the paper to an associate editor, who distributes the paper for review. The associate editor recommends acceptance or release of the paper to the editor, but the authority to accept or release the paper rests with the editor. Appeals of decisions should first be directed to the editor. See also the "Policy for Appeal of Manuscript Review" at the end of this chapter.

AGRICULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL LETTERS

Agricultural & Environmental Letters (AEL) is an electronic-only open-access journal published continuously by ASA, CSSA, and SSSA. The AEL editorial board consists of the editor, technical editors, associate editors, the editors-in-chief of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, the managing editor, the publications director, and the chief executive officer.

Scope

Papers are communications-length articles (generally 2,500 words or fewer). The journal publishes high-impact, broad-reaching, and timely research on major scientific advances in the entire range of the agricultural and environmental sciences.

Agricultural & Environmental Letters uses an expedited review and publication process. With this goal, the Editorial Board evaluates manuscripts submitted to AEL according to the following criteria:

- High-impact innovative results with broad implications at the forefront of one or several agricultural disciplines.
- Results with immediate impact on the research of others and requiring rapid publication.
- Instrument or methods manuscript introducing an innovative technique that makes new science advance possible, with immediate applications to agricultural disciplines.

Manuscripts describing cross-disciplinary research or addressing emerging issues are of particular interest.

Manuscript Handling

Contributions to AEL should be submitted via the online submission system at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ael>. See the instructions to authors (<https://dl.sciencesocieties.org/publications/ael/author-instructions>) for further details.

All papers, whether invited or volunteered, are subject to review. The rest of the procedures and responsibilities of editorial board members are similar to those of AJ. Appeals of decisions by the editorial board are handled by the editor. See also the "Policy for Appeal of Manuscript Review" at the end of this chapter.

URBAN AGRICULTURE & REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Urban Agriculture & Regional Food Systems (UA), copublished by ASA and CSSA, is a continuously published electronic-only open-access journal. The editorial board consists of the editor, associate editors, the editors-in-chief of ASA and CSSA, the managing editor, the publications director, and the chief executive officer.

Scope

Urban Agriculture & Regional Food Systems is a multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed journal focusing on urban and peri-urban agriculture and systems of urban and regional food provisioning in developing, transition, and advanced economies. The journal intends to be a platform for cutting-edge research on urban and peri-urban agricultural production for food and nonfood (e.g., flowers, medicine, cosmetics) uses and for social, environmental, and health services (e.g., tourism, water storage, care, education, waste recycling, urban greening). It aims to explore, analyze, and critically reflect upon urban and regional food production, processing, transport, trade, marketing, and consumption and the social, economic, environmental, health and spatial contexts, relations, and impacts of these food provisioning activities.

Manuscript Handling

Submissions to UF should be made via the online submission system at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/urbanag>. See the instructions to authors (dl.sciencesocieties.org/publications/ua/author-instructions) for further details.

All papers, whether invited or volunteered, are subject to review. Papers are assigned by the editor to an associate editor, who obtains a minimum of two reviews, followed by a recommendation for decision to the editor. Appeals of decisions by the editorial board are handled by the editor. See also the "Policy for Appeal of Manuscript Review" at the end of this chapter.

POLICY FOR APPEAL OF MANUSCRIPT REVIEW

The Societies as a scientific publisher must make judgments about the correctness and relevance of manuscripts under consideration for publication. The Societies rely on qualified volunteers to review manuscripts and to serve on editorial boards to make these editorial decisions and to provide feedback to authors. In the vast majority of cases, this process works smoothly.

Should an author feel that the process was implemented incorrectly or that a review was biased or poorly done, the author should first inform the editor of that journal and attempt to resolve the concern at that level. If the concern is not resolved, the author may appeal the decision to the editor(s)-in-chief of that journal. The decision of the editor-in-chief will be final.

All volunteers involved in evaluating a manuscript will be assumed to have acted in an appropriate and professional manner unless and until it is demonstrated to be otherwise. The Societies' volunteers will keep all those involved in an appeal informed of the process, will always be cognizant that such investigations are difficult for all concerned, and will use their best judgment regarding tact and confidentiality.