LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The annual editorial board meeting of the Agronomy Journal (AJ) was held on 15 Nov. 2006 in Indianapolis, IN. A number of issues were presented to the editorial board, and the intent of this letter is to inform our readership about the board’s current activities.

Acquisitions Associate Editor

At our editorial board meeting held on 9 Nov. 2005 in Salt Lake City, UT, we approved adding an Acquisitions Associate Editor to the editorial board. Given the approval by the editorial board, on 22 Feb. 2006 Dr. Wesley Rosenthal from Texas A&M University was appointed as our new Acquisitions Associate Editor. His major function is to work with members of the editorial board, particularly the Editor, to identify topic areas and then solicit authors to prepare manuscripts on these topics. Most of the content sought would likely be review articles. In the intervening time since his appointment several topic areas have been identified, and Dr. Rosenthal is working with several authors to prepare review manuscripts for submission to AJ.

Manuscript Handling, Submissions, and Acceptance

In handling manuscripts, we allow 2 weeks for editors to assign reviewers, 90 days to complete reviews and make an initial recommendation, 30 days for reviewers to complete their reviews, and 90 days for authors to complete a revision of their manuscript; thus, the maximum time from submission to final decision should be 194 days. The data in Table 1 show we are doing well in most areas. We still need to work on reducing the time it takes associate editors to assign reviewers.

The data in Table 2 show the number of international manuscript submissions to AJ. International submissions are a significant portion of the total number of submissions and, based on the 2005 and year-to-date 2006 information, the number of international submissions appears to be increasing. We continue to encourage the submission of high quality international manuscripts and recognize their importance to the journal.

Occasionally, I receive inquiries from people asking about the percentage of manuscripts submitted to AJ that are accepted and published. In 2003, we published 55% of the manuscripts submitted. In 2004, we also accepted 55%, and in 2005 we accepted 59%.

Average Length of Manuscripts

During the past 23 years, the length of articles published in AJ increased from an average of 4.6 pages in 1984 to 8.4 pages in 2006 (Fig. 1). The average length of articles in Volume 50 (1957) was 3.7 pages. Thus, during the past nearly 50 years (from 1957 to 2005) the average length of articles has more than doubled and over the past 23 years (from 1984 to increments. This was a deterrent against long articles, part of the editorial culture to keep the papers brief so they would be more readable. This was a problem for encouraging authors to prepare short papers during this time period.

The tri-societies adopted a new publication pricing structure for manuscripts submitted at the beginning of 2004. The publication fee for AJ was $450.00 for members and $700.00 for nonmembers. The publication fee was increased by $50.00 for nonmembers each year for the remainder of 2004 and 2005. This pricing structure does not encourage authors to submit concise manuscripts. In fact, some authors have viewed it as an outlet to submit long manuscripts that are not suitable for publication in many other journals. Beginning 2007 the AJ editorial board will deliberate and make a recommendation to the Budget and Finance Committee and the Executive Committee of ASA to consider revising the pricing structure for AJ in an attempt to encourage authors to prepare shorter papers, promote the economic health of the journal, and to maintain a consistent pricing structure for the entire time period.

Centennial Anniversary of AJ

During 2008, we will celebrate the centennial anniversary of AJ. To commemorate this important occasion, the editorial board has planned several activities. We have established four committees and chairs of each committee, who are responsible for their associated activity: AJ Centennial Cover Committee—chair, Mark Brickey; AJ Centennial Bookmark Committee—co-chairs, Jeremy Singer and Bill Payne; AJ Centennial Calendar Committee—chair, Bill Raun; AJ Centennial Poster Committee—chair, Albert Sims.

During 2006, in cooperation with the ASA Centennial Committee, the AJ centennial bookmark was printed. The content for the bookmark is the AJ centennial information, and on the other side is the ASA centennial information. The bookmark was initially distributed by putting a copy in each registration packet for the ASA meetings that were held in Indianapolis in 2006. The bookmark will be similarly distributed during the 2007 meetings to be held in New Orleans.

The content for a 2008 centennial calendar was obtained and completed by Bill Raun and his committee. The calendar will be printed during mid-2007 and distributed in late 2007. The calendar features long-term field plots around the world.

The bookmark and calendar committees have completed their work. The cover committee and the postcard committee will continue their work during 2007. We appreciate the contribution these committees have made to the centennial celebration of AJ.