By the middle of 2016, the Vadose Zone Journal (VZJ) will roll out two new features: Focus Topics and a new type of manuscript called “Updates.” The idea for these two new features was proposed at the VZJ editorial board meeting in Minneapolis last November, and it was further developed by the editorial board and accepted by the journal co-Editors in January.

Focus Topics

Focus Topics collect recently published VZJ content (regular papers, special section papers, reviews, technical notes, etc.), dating back three years, to highlight the important gains in scientific understanding in a specific field of vadose zone research. The content of Focus Topics should be either broader than the topic of a special section or it should present new topics not yet addressed by special sections. The goal of Focus Topics is to increase the visibility of key scientific concepts of importance to VZJ readers, thus providing more continuity and follow-through on topics, which—for special sections—are no longer accepting new contributions.

Including a paper in a Focus Topic does not change how an article is cited; the journal will maintain the same DOI number and manner in which the article was cited.

Vereecken Takes Over as VZJ Editor

On 31 Dec. 2015, Michael Young retired as Editor of the Vadose Zone Journal (VZJ). Dr. Young has been involved with the journal from its inception, first serving as an Associate Editor for eight years, then three years as co-Editor, and finally as Editor from 2013 until 2015. We thank Michael for his dedication, commitment, and energy for VZJ, making it a successful and highly visible international journal and a highly esteemed venue for vadose and critical zone research. His initiative to roll out the new paper types “Rapid Communications” and “Reproducible Research” are key landmarks for VZJ.

On 1 Jan. 2016, Dr. Harry Vereecken became the new Editor of VZJ. He is currently the director of the Agrosphere Institute at the Forschungszentrum Jülich, Germany and professor of soil science at Bonn University, Germany. His research interests include hydrogeophysics, impact factor by continuing to attract high quality submissions and by further pushing the release of short communications, special sections, and Rapid Communication papers. In addition, two new features are under preparation: Focus Topics and Updates (see above). These features aim at increasing the visibility of core research fields of VZJ and will be implemented in 2016. Vereecken will further expand the number of invited high quality reviews by leading scientists in vadose zone and critical zone research and directly communicating with prospective authors at meetings, conferences, and workshops. He will explore the potential of state-of-the-art communication tools (Twitter, video representation, etc.) to increase impact and visibility. These activities will help increase the number of regular paper submissions.