Reviewers—The Unsung Heroes of SSSAJ

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Each year in the May-June issue we print a list of those who reviewed articles for SSSAJ in the previous year. This list may go unnoticed by many of our readers, but this year we made some changes to better highlight our reviewers. First, we made this year’s list a part of this editorial, so it is right up front in the journal in hopes that readers will not gloss over it. Second, we will highlight the list of reviewers on our website (https://www.soils.org/publications/sssaj), and update it there annually. Third, I’d like to share a few thoughts about reviewers and reviewing that I hope are interesting and informative.

SSSAJ receives over 400 manuscripts each year, which means we reach out to nearly 1,000 scientists for their expertise as reviewers. It is gratifying that so many of our colleagues are willing to give of their time and expertise to assist the Editorial Board in manuscript review, and to help authors to improve their work. Sadly, the efforts of reviewers seem underappreciated. Yes, we are able to acknowledge a few each year with our awards for Excellence in Reviewing, but most must be content with the personal satisfaction of a job well done, or occasionally an acknowledgement at the end of a paper that thanks unnamed reviewers for their contribution to the final product. For you reviewers that toil anonymously, please accept my gratitude for your service.

For those who made it to this final paragraph, I would like to extend a call to serve as a reviewer. You already know that the rewards are small, but reviewing is both a duty—when one publishes and depends on the efforts of others, it is only right to respond in kind—and an opportunity for service to your profession. Sadly, year after year the biggest challenge that SSSAJ Associate Editors tell me they face is that of finding people willing to provide a review. So, the next time you are approached, I’d ask you to respond right away, and preferably agree to do the review yourself. Should other obligations prevent doing the review, still respond right away, and either suggest other potential reviewers or, better yet, ask permission to mentor someone in your research group in doing the review. The latter helps prepare the next generation of reviewers for service to science. Finally, for those who never, or are only infrequently, asked to review a manuscript, follow the directions found at http://www.manuscripttracker.com/ver2/jsEnabledDefault.asp?journal=sssaj to become part of our reviewer database.