Editor’s Report | Michael Young

The year 2014 has been exciting and productive for *Vadose Zone Journal* (VZJ). Michael Young (UT-Austin), has completed his second year as Editor, helping to implement several new changes to the journal operations. Co-Editors Harry Vereecken (Forschungszentrum Jülich), Jirka Simunek (UC Riverside), and Bridget Scanlon (UT-Austin) have done tremendous jobs handling manuscripts, special issues and assisting associate editors who are on the front lines, working daily with reviewers and authors. We are extremely grateful for Lisa Al-Amoodi (Managing Editor) and Brett Holte (Submissions Manager) for their patience, persistence, and ongoing willingness to implement new ideas that more quickly place content into the hands of our readers.

The journal continued to do very well. The 2013 impact factor (IF), which sometimes takes on a life of its own, increased to 2.412 from 2.200, and the 5-year IF increased to 2.799 from 2.672. These impact factors are the highest we’ve seen since at least 2008, and the journal rankings place VZJ 7th of all Soil Science journals worldwide and 17th for Water Resources. These are exceptionally good numbers. The immediacy index increased slightly to 0.389; we would obviously like to see that increase, and we’re working on ways to highlight articles and to expand how contributions are communicated to the public and scientific community. Three such changes include a monthly publishing cycle, the addition of a “Priority Communication” type article, and the addition of a Communications Editor to help promote newly accepted manuscripts.

First, we switched from a quarterly to monthly publishing cycle. This was done for several reasons, but mainly because the continuous rollout of papers being published was not consistent with a quarterly bundling final contributions into an “issue” that could then be available for indexing, eTOCs, etc. By publishing monthly, we can alert readers more quickly that new contributions are available, authors wait less time to see their paper completed, and indexing sites (Web of Knowledge, Google Scholar, etc.) have material they can index (assuming this is done quickly too). We believe that monthly publishing will have a net positive effect on the journal.

Second, we implemented a “Priority Communication” paper type, which is intended to highlight time-sensitive new research results that have far-reaching impacts across the vadose zone community. These papers receive extra oversight, through the entire review and revision process, with a goal of publishing manuscripts in just over 1 month from submission. VZJ has, to date, received four such articles, and one has been published thus far.

Third, along with the other SSSA journals, VZJ has added a “Communications Editor” whose role is to seek recently accepted papers with wider public appeal and to “translate” the science into language more consumable by the general public, using a variety of media from CSA News, to news releases, to social media. Venkat Lakshmi (University of South Carolina) has taken the reigns of this activity and has done an outstanding job! The goal is to make the public and our scientific community more aware that new scientific findings are available. To date, we have promoted 11 articles (4.35% of all articles), with more than half done just this year. Analyses by Brett Holte have shown that promoting articles increases article viewing by 50%. More time is need to understand whether this will increase citation, but this is a very important activity that leads us in that direction.