

JEB Editorial 2016

During my four year spell as Editor in Chief of JEB, the most persistent questions I have been asked have concerned double blind reviewing and other issues around equality of opportunities. I am therefore very pleased to announce that we are about to instigate double blind reviewing at JEB. As of February 2016, all papers will be reviewed anonymously, that is, reviewers will not know the identity of the authors (as well as authors not knowing the identity of reviewers, unless this is waived). The JEB board of editors and ESEB executive have discussed the implication of this several times, and different models of blind reviewing. There is a healthy degree of scepticism about the merits or not of doing this (data is equivocal) and a frequently raised comment is that reviewers can usually guess the authors of papers. After deliberation we have rejected these criticisms; often guesses about authorship are wrong and even if one guesses the laboratory correctly, whether the paper is by a principle investigator or an early career stage researcher is unknown (and a major source of potential bias). We should embrace the benefits of double blind reviewing and avoid guess work! Most importantly, to my mind, is the simple fact that many of our members wish to see this introduced. We are a society journal, and should be receptive to the preferences of our members.

The editorial office and deciding editors will continue to know the source of manuscripts. While not ideal, the appropriate handling of papers (especially assigning reviewers) makes blind reviewing at the editorial stage almost unworkable, so we will continue with editors knowing authors' identities. Editorial rejections are used very sparingly (currently around 10% of articles submitted) and only when we are confident that the paper is not in JEB remit or very unlikely to survive the review process for other reasons.

These are very interesting times for publishing with a whole range of publishing and reviewing models being promoted and adopted. As a society journal, I believe that the current model of JEB is appropriate. We accept Open Access papers if authors or funders request this, with reduced costs for society members. Our profit share from the journal is used to support the society and members, help with congresses and all the outreach and other excellent initiatives run by ESEB.

Another major debate over the last few years has concerned data availability. We require data deposition for papers published in JEB and believe this is appropriate for our field. If appropriate, embargos are possible, upon request. There are a whole raft of new suggestions being made to improve the reproducibility of research, including pre-registration of research plans, and we can expect further changes in our typical models of publishing over the next few years.

After discussion with the ESEB Executive I have extended my spell as Editor in Chief for a further two years, until 2017. I am extremely grateful to the Deciding Editors & Reviews Editor, all members of the Board of Reviewing Editors, our Managing Editor and others at the office in St Andrews, and all the staff at Wiley Blackwell who have helped keep JEB performing well over the last few years. JEB is functioning well as a society journal, providing a quality publishing outlet for our society members and the broader community of Evolutionary Biologists.

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