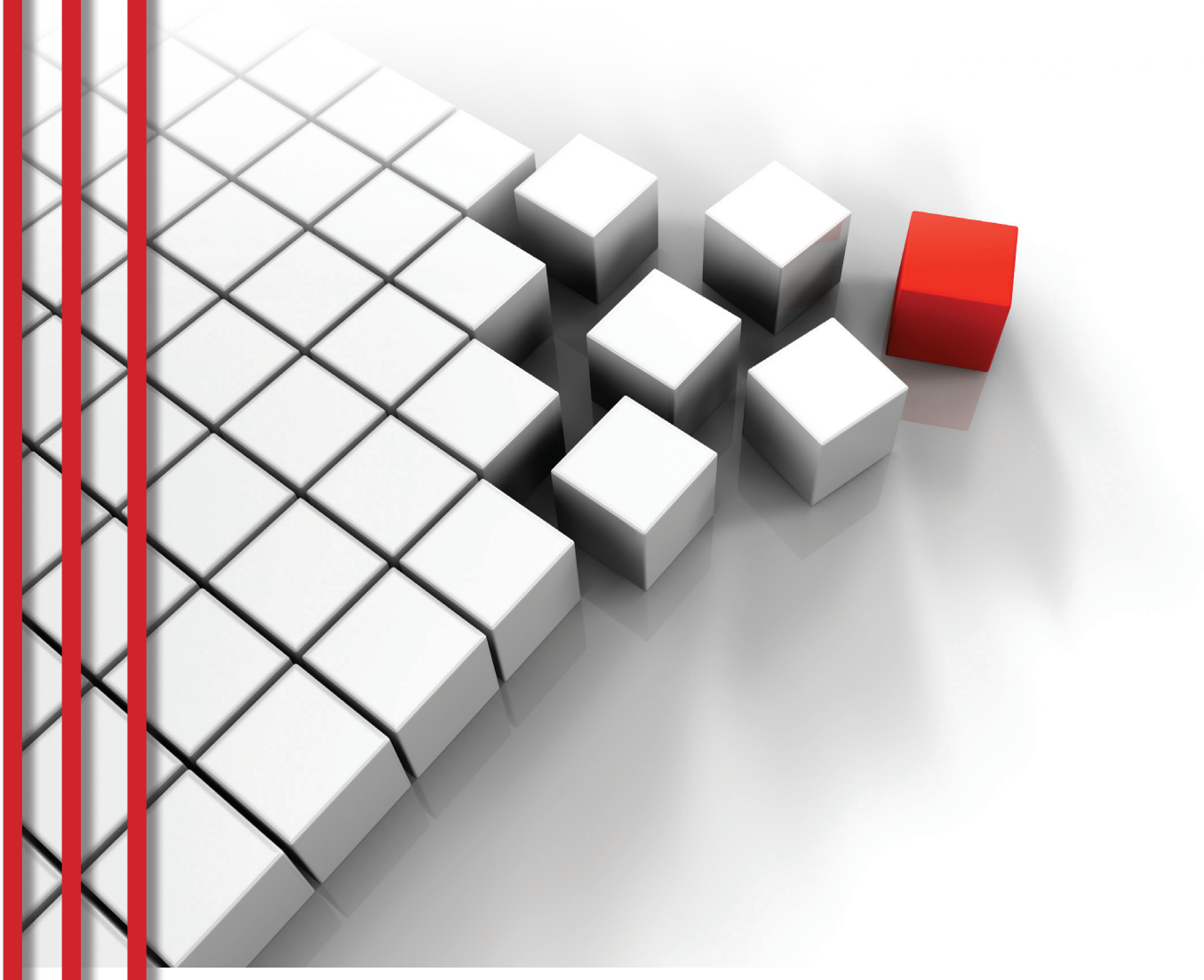
Editors' Handbook



ASA American Society of Agronomy | CSSA Crop Science Society of America | SSSA Soil Science Society of America

Editors' Handbook

2007
Updated 2024

American Society of Agronomy, Inc.
Crop Science Society of America, Inc.
Soil Science Society of America, Inc.

5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711

www.agronomy.org www.crops.org www.soils.org

Contents

Chapter 1
Editorial Responsibilities

The editing of all scientific papers published by ASA, CSSA, and SSSA is a two-step process. First, the journal editor together with other members of the editorial board, usually technical editors (called co-editors in *Vadose Zone Journal* and senior editors in *Agrosystems, Geosciences & Environment*; referred to here as technical editors) and associate editors, determine whether a scientific paper represents a significant addition to the literature. If so, one or more of those editors work with the author to make certain the paper is complete and scientifically accurate.

After the assigned editor (journal, technical, or associate depending on the journal) accepts a paper for publication, journal program managers (program managers) employed by ASA, CSSA, and SSSA oversee production of the paper to ensure its adherence to ASA, CSSA, SSSA, and other recognized rules regarding style, grammar, and quality and consistency of presentation.

In cases of possible disagreement among editors, the journal editors have the final say regarding matters of scientific content and style, and the progam managers have the final say regarding matters of grammar and presentation style.

Editors-in-Chief

Each society has an editor-in-chief, nominated by the president and confirmed by the board of directors. Each editor-in-chief serves a three-year term and may be reappointed for a second term. These persons have overall responsibility for all publications of the respective societies. The editor-in-chief serves in an ex officio capacity on that society's board of directors, on the editorial boards of all journals sponsored or cosponsored by that society, and on the intersociety Editorial Policy Coordination Committee. Chairship of this committee rotates annually among the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA editors-in-chief.

Each editor-in-chief makes recommendations to that society's president about appointment and reappointment of editors of journals and other publications. The editor-in-chief also, on behalf of the president and after consultation with the editor, appoints the persons to fill the technical editor posts created by the executive committee of the sponsoring society. New technical editor positions may not be created without the approval of the sponsoring society's board of directors.

Initial appeals are handled by the journal editor; if the situation is not resolved, an author may then appeal to the editor-in-chief, whose decision

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook.*

is final. The editor-in-chief of each society is responsible for appeals of manuscript releases from the journals.

Editors-in-chief may also be called on by their society's board of directors to handle special projects or problems and to perform other editorial duties.

Editors

The journal editor, who serves as chair of the journal's editorial board, is nominated by the president of the sponsoring societies and confirmed by the board of directors. The editor serves for a three-year term and may be reappointed for a second term.

The editor is responsible for the overall quality of the journal's content and implements policy decisions approved by the board of directors. The editor and editorial board oversee procedures for manuscript submission, acceptance, rejection, and publication, as well as the criteria for review and referee of papers. The editor delegates editorial duties to other members of the editorial board and takes an active part in defining the journal's aims, scope, policies, and editorial coverage. The editor prepares an annual report for the sponsoring society describing the journal status and recommendations for changes.

The editors of most ASA, CSSA, and SSSA journals receive manuscripts, assign the papers to technical editors or associate editors, and track the status of manuscripts in review through the online submission system. The editor handles the initial appeals procedure for manuscripts that are rejected.

The editor may write editorials or solicit manuscripts on special topics. Letters to the editor are approved by the editor, who seeks advice from the editorial board and others as needed.

The specific duties of a journal editor may vary with each journal and are described in more detail in Chapter 3.

Technical Editors

Technical editors are nominated by the journal editor and appointed by the editor-in-chief on behalf of the president(s) of the respective society board(s). As with the duties of editor, the duties of technical editors (co-editors for *Vadose Zone Journal* and senior editors for *Agrosystems, Geosciences & Environment*) vary from journal to journal. Some journals have no technical editors.

Most technical editors are responsible for rejecting manuscripts, and some also hold the authority to approve manuscripts for publication. The technical editor serves for a three-year term and may be reappointed for a second term.

Technical editors work under the direction of the journal editor and are responsible for the technical and intellectual content of the journal in

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

their assigned areas. They direct the work of associate editors in reviewing and evaluating the manuscripts submitted to the journal.

The specific duties of a technical editor can vary with each journal and are described in more detail in Chapter 3.

Technical editors maintain the overall responsibility for determining that in-depth and timely reviews are obtained from knowledgeable scientists.

Technical editors also are responsible for taking an active interest in assisting the editor to define the journal's aims, policies, and editorial coverage and in recruiting members for the editorial board.

Associate Editors

Associate editors for each journal are appointed by the journal editor on behalf of the president of the respective society. Associate editors serve three-year terms and may be reappointed for a second term. In rare circumstances, associate editors may be reapppointed for an additional term.

Associate editors are responsible for obtaining reviews of each manuscript and for evaluating in a timely manner the technical and intellectual content and suitability of manuscripts assigned to them.

If so delegated by the editor or technical editor, the associate editor works with the authors to obtain the required changes in manuscripts that are likely to be acceptable after revision.

Associate editors recommend to the editor or technical editor (depending on the board's structure) when manuscripts should be rejected. Depending on the board's structure, the associate editor recommends acceptance to the editor or technical editor. For some journals, the associate editor may be authorized to accept papers for publication.

Associate editors also assist the editor in defining the journal's aims, policies, and editorial coverage, as well as in recruiting members for the editorial board.

The specific duties of a associate editor can vary with each journal and are described in more detail in Chapter 3.

Journal Program Managers

The program manager of each journal is assigned by the publications director. The program manager oversees submission and production of papers approved for publication, including transmittal of proofs to authors. The publications director, together with the program manager, makes contract arrangements for production of the journal. The program manager works closely with the editor and editor-in-chief to maintain the quality of the journal.

The publications director may assign one or more production manager to aid in journal production.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

Accepting or Rejecting a Paper

The policy of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA is that no scientific paper may be published in any of their journals, books, or other scholarly publications unless at least two unbiased professional scientists agree that the paper is acceptable. Similarly, once the formal review has begun, no scientific paper may be rejected by one of the scholarly publications unless at least two unbiased professional scientists agree to that rejection. Editorial board members are expected to exercise professional judgment, not merely follow the conclusion of the volunteer reviewers. Specific procedures for implementing this policy are detailed in Chapter 2.

Editorial Misconduct

The following statement on editorial misconduct was approved by the ASA, CSSA, SSSA Executive Committees in their respective March 1997 meetings.

Allegations of editorial misconduct by members of the editorial boards or by reviewers of any ASA, CSSA, or SSSA publication are serious and deserve attention and resolution by a fair and impartial process. Procedures to investigate alleged editorial misconduct are designed to provide all parties to the dispute an opportunity to confidentially present and discuss the facts, and to avoid potential discredit to any party involved. Equitable resolution of the matter is the goal of this policy. All parties in the dispute are urged to seek the opinion of legal counsel.

Definition: Editorial misconduct is any action by a participant in the editorial and review procedure of an ASA, CSSA, or SSSA publication that disadvantages the scholarship of the authors of an unpublished document in the scientific community. Examples of editorial misconduct include plagiarism, copying unpublished scholarly documents without authorization of the authors, or use of documents submitted to Societies' publications for unethical scientific, academic, or scholarly advantage.

1. Allegations of editorial misconduct must be submitted in writing and signed by the complainant. The complainant will submit the written complaint to the editor of the publication responsible for managing the review of the complainant's unpublished document.
2. The editor will endeavor to secure from the complainant all materials pertaining to the alleged misconduct. The editor will summarize the facts of the allegation and communicate them in writing to the alleged perpetrator of the misconduct, hereafter called the respondent. The editor will advise the president of the appropriate Society and the appropriate Society editor-in-chief of the allegations. The editor-in-chief will manage the inquire into the alleged editorial misconduct.
3. The editor-in-chief will appoint an ad hoc committee of three Society members to investigate the allegations and to obtain additional information from any parties to the dispute.
4. The ad hoc committee will conduct its investigations and deliberations in

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

confidence. At the conclusion of the investigation, the committee will submit its findings in writing to the editor-in-chief, and return to that officer all materials used in the conduct of their duties.

5. The editor-in-chief will communicate the findings of the ad hoc committee to the complainant and to the respondent. If the committee finds for the complainant, the editor-in-chief will determine and implement the action to be taken against the respondent. If the committee finds the allegations to be without merit, the editor-in-chief will send a letter of no-finding to the respondent and the complainant, and dismiss the inquiry.
6. Either party to the dispute has the right to appeal the findings of the investigation. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Society president within 90 days of the date of the editor-in-chief's findings. The Society president will determine the merits of the appeal. The Society president will determine the process and venue for resolving the appeal and communicate its findings in writing to the complainant and respondent.
7. After resolution of the allegation, the editor responsible for managing the review of the document involved in the dispute will summarize the matter for the editor-in-chief and president and propose modifications of editorial policy or practice to reduce the likelihood of a recurrence of the alleged misconduct.

Record Retention

The review process is managed entirely through the online submission system; thus, record retention for a manuscript is automatic. Headquarters retains records of the production process of approved manuscripts for at least three months after their publication.

Stipend Policy

The three societies provide an allowance to journal editors and technical editors. Those entitled to a stipend are informed at the beginning of their term of the policies regarding reimbursement and are updated annually on the allowed maximum amounts for the coming year.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

Chapter 2
The Review–Editing Process

The process of converting a manuscript into a published technical paper involves numerous people with various areas of expertise. The dual goal of all these people is to maintain the publication's high standards and to help authors present their information clearly, succinctly, and conforming to style.

BEFORE THE REVIEW BEGINS

As noted in Chapter 1, no paper may be accepted for publication in an ASA, CSSA, or SSSA scholarly publication unless at least two unbiased, professional scientists independently agree that the paper merits publication. Also, no paper that has been entered into the formal review process may be rejected by an ASA, CSSA, or SSSA scholarly publication unless at least two unbiased professional scientists independently agree that the paper is unacceptable for publication.

The first responsibility of the journal editor is to determine if the paper is ready for review. Potential problems with papers may be nonscientific or relate to scientific content. Such problems may also be recognized by the technical editor (referred to as co-editor or senior editor in some of our journals) or associate editor.

Nonscientific Problems

Nonscientific problems may render a paper "not ready for review" and require action before the paper is entered into the review process.

Structural Problems

Structural problems include, but are not limited to, such things major format flaws or the lack of a major component, such as the figures or tables. For those journals that use a double-anonymous review, lack of conformity to the particular needs of that review process falls into this category.

Problems with Language

Language problems that make it difficult to assess the quality of the science can render a paper not ready for review. It is best in these cases for the editor to reject the paper without review. If such a manuscript is from an author whose first language is not English, the editor may return the manuscript to the author with the suggestion for the author to contact a professional translator for help.

Judgment and tact when contacting the author are necessary for the editorial board member who has received such a paper.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook.*

Problems of Content

Scientific

Scientific problems include serious flaws in the work itself, such as the design of the experiment, lack of necessary replication, or inadequate statistical treatment that make it impossible to draw the stated conclusions from the data. These are the sort of flaws referred to in Cases 1 and 2 below.

The associate editor should study each assigned paper carefully to see if it has one of these intrinsic problems before moving the paper to the formal review stage. If such a problem exists, the associate editor should discuss the paper with the technical editor or editor to determine whether it should be released immediately for those problems rather than waste the time of reviewers. (Such a release is possible because two editors—two scientists—agree to it.)

Suitability

A manuscript submitted to one journal may be better suited for another ASA, CSSA, SSSA journal. The editorial board member who receives the manuscript may make a decision to "reject and transfer" to that journal. The author then has the option to accept the transfer and submit to the second journal or ignore the suggestion to transfer.

Once the editor and technical editor determine that a paper is ready for a review, it is assigned to an associate editor.

REVIEWERS

Locating Reviewers

Finding reviewers for manuscripts can be one of the most frustrating jobs for the associate editor. The current online submission management system used for ASA, CSSA, SSSA journals has a Reviewer Locator feature that uses metadata to link paper topics with authors from Web of Science in similar fields. Other strategies include using the reference list of the manuscript to identify reviewers. One can also search ASA, CSSA, and SSSA journals for related papers using key topics or words in the title or abstract. Annual meetings abstracts show who is recently working on a topic. Note that reviewers do not need to be members of ASA, CSSA, or SSSA. Authors are also required to provide a list of preferred and non-preferred reviewers. These reviewers cannot have a conflict of interest involving the authors or the study, and the editorial board is not required not use any reviewers suggested by authors.

In addition to well-known researchers in the area of the manuscript, one can also seek out reviewers from under-represented groups, such as international scientists, early career scientists, and Ph.D. students. Asking for suggestions from those who turn down the opportunity to review the paper is another strategy.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

Ensuring Unbiased Reviews

If there is a concern that a potential reviewer may have (or have even the strong appearance of) a conflict of interest with one or more of the authors, the associate editor should select another reviewer. Similarly, they should heed the wishes of a reviewer who asks to be excused from reviewing a paper for a similar reason. The following list (adapted from USDA-ARS guidelines) is by no means exhaustive, but a positive response to any of the following (or similar) questions is a sufficient reason to select a different reviewer.

- Have you had significant and acrimonious disagreements with the authors in the past?
- Are you and the authors co-investigators on a current research project?
- Have you and the authors jointly published an article in the past three years?
- Are you close friends with one or more of the authors?
- Are you working in the same area of research with the authors so that you might be considered to be a competitor or gain an advantage by reviewing the manuscript?
- Are you at the same location as the authors?
- Did you review and approve the manuscript as a peer reviewer prior to its submission to the journal?

Obtaining Anonymous Reviews

The policy of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA journals is to keep the reviewers anonymous from authors and from each other. Some journals also keep the names of the authors anonymous from the reviewers (double-anonymous review).

If a reviewer inserts their name into their review comments, the policy is to edit out the reviewer's name from the review. There is, of course, no way to prevent a reviewer from contacting an author after a paper is published.

Checking Reviews for Inappropriate Language

In addition to ensuring the reviewer's name does not appear in the review, the associate editor should also take care that the review does not contain personal attacks or derogatory comments, either directly or indirectly. Per our reviewer guidelines: "The ideal review will be fair, unbiased, prompt, and confidential without derogatory comments and should be constructive in nature. The reviewer's job is not to find reasons to reject a manuscript but to help the author improve the manuscript so that the author, journal, and reader all benefit."

Depending on the level of change they deem necessary, the associate editor, in communication with their technical editor if needed, should

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

determine whether they can make the change themselves (if minor and easily corrected), rescind the review completely, or rescind the review and ask the reviewer to make any necessary changes. If the associate editor edits the review, they may also wish to contact the reviewer and explain to them what comments were inappropriate.

Obtaining Timely Reviews

All scientists want fair reviews of their papers, but they also want them as soon as possible. Initially assigning more reviewers prevents delays if the first reviews received do not agree. The downside to assigning a large number of reviewers to a single manuscript is increased difficulty in finding new reviewers for other assigned manuscripts.

The associate editor may serve as one of the reviewers unless the subject matter is too far outside their area of expertise. If there is no substantial disagreement between the first two reviews (complete agreement is rare), associate editors do not need to wait for a third review before they begin summarizing the key comments of the reviewers. If another review arrives before work on the paper is completed and if that review contains valuable information overlooked by the other two reviewers, that information can also be passed on to the author. If not enough reviews have been submitted to make a decision, the associate editor should contact delayed reviewers and encourage completion of their review.

It is good practice for associate editors to contact potential reviewers outside the online submission system before assigning a manuscript. This will determine if the person's email and other contact information are current, if they are available to review the paper in a timely fashion, and if they have a potential conflict of interest (as outlined above) that might preclude reviewing that paper.

Obtaining Sufficient Reviews

After a paper is deemed to be suitable for review, the task of the editorial board is to then determine if the paper is suitable for publication. Such a decision can be reached only upon the agreement of at least two unbiased, professional scientists.

Thus, the first task of the associate editor is to obtain two recommendations for revision, acceptance, or rejection. The associate editor is expected to exercise professional judgment in reviewing a paper and not simply tally up "yeas" and "nays" and act accordingly. If, for example, a reviewer has recommended acceptance without change for a paper that has a major flaw, or recommended release of an excellent paper, the associate editor has the obligation to discount that review and, if necessary, obtain another.

A few hypothetical cases are given below, all of which take place within the editorial board of a journal whose structure calls for a technical

editor to receive a manuscript and assign it to an associate editor who is to handle the review process.

Case 1. A technical editor receives a manuscript, studies it, and notes a serious flaw that by itself could preclude publication. The technical editor contacts an associate editor before assigning the manuscript and says, "Read this carefully before you assign reviewers. I do not believe it is suitable for publication." The associate editor reads the paper and agrees with the technical editor's assessment. These two agreements allow the release of the manuscript without additional input.

Case 2. The technical editor is assigned several manuscripts on the same day and, so as not to delay review, assigns them to associate editors without studying them thoroughly. An associate editor who is assigned one of the papers notices a serious flaw in it and, before assigning it to reviewers, contacts the technical or co-editor to discuss the paper. The technical editor reads the manuscript thoroughly, agrees with the associate editor, and the two agree to release the paper.

Case 3. The associate editor assigns a paper to three volunteer reviewers, then reads it while awaiting the return of the three additional reviews. The associate editor finds serious enough problems with the manuscript to believe it should not be published. Two of the outside reviews within two or three days recommend "accept as submitted" with no further comments. The associate editor waits for the third outside review. The third reviewer has written a thoughtful series of comments pointing out the problems that the associate editor had noted as well as several others. The associate editor now has recommendations from two independent professional scientists who read the manuscript thoroughly and agree the manuscript should not be published. The associate editor releases the manuscript, even though two reviewers recommended acceptance and two reviewers recommended rejection.

Case 4. The associate editor and another scientist believe they have read an excellent paper, but three other scientists, all of whom had the same major professor in college, recommend that the paper be rejected. After studying the three release recommendations, the associate editor determines that the reasons given for release are personal rather than scientific. Again, two independent scientists who have carefully studied the paper agree it is suitable for publishing, allowing publishing to proceed.

If examples such as those given in Cases 3 and 4 were to happen—and we have no evidence that they ever have—the associate editor would be wise to thoroughly document the reasons for the action, whether it be acceptance or rejection. It would also be a good idea to consult the technical editor and perhaps the editor as well, so that at least four scientists have

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

agreed to the chosen action, regardless of the number of responses the other way.

Agreement of Reviewers

The matter of agreement is at least as subjective as it is objective. While unanimous agreement for acceptance or release of a paper is possible, more likely there will be some level of disagreement. The following is one common set of reviewer recommendations (note that the exact wording of the recommendations may vary):

- Reviewer 1: minor revision
- Reviewer 2: major revision
- Reviewer 3: reject

The associate editor who receives recommendations like these must exercise judgment. Was Reviewer 1 unduly lenient, or was Reviewer 3 unduly harsh? Once that question is answered, the comments of Reviewer 2 could be used to bolster the remaining recommendation.

Revisions

Another consideration is how often to seek further revisions of the manuscript. Rather than allowing a manuscript to go back and forth several times between author, reviewer, and associate editor, it could be appropriate to recommend rejection of a borderline manuscript and encourage resubmission.

The associate or technical editor should keep in contact with the author if there are delays with the author uploading the revised manuscript or if the author's response to reviewers comments is inadequate. If the author and associate editor agree, and depending on the circumstances, the associate editor may extend the revision deadline.

Once the revised manuscript is uploaded, the associate editor should attempt the review of the revision alone without assigning outside reviewers by checking that all reviewer concerns have been sufficiently addressed. This would still count as two scientists recommending acceptance if one reviewer had previously recommended minor revision (i.e., accept after incorporating reviewers comments) or if the technical editor or editor examines the manuscript before making the final accept decision.

If the changes are extensive or the area is too far out of the associate editor's expertise, the associate editor might review what they can and send the manuscript to one or two reviewers. In such instances, it is preferable that the same reviewers who reviewed the original version also review the revised version unless the associate editor deemed the original review inadequate. The associate editor should try to prevent numerous cycling with the authors; one should not demand unnecessary changes, but it is appropriate to insist that authors correct scientific flaws or a presentation that would prevent readers from understanding the manuscript. The

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

associate editor should obtain support from the technical editor or editor if necessary.

TYPES OF PAPERS REVIEWED

By far the most common type of paper to appear in ASA, CSSA, and SSSA journals is the original research paper, and the greatest portion of this section is devoted to the review of those papers. Our journals also publish other paper types, which are outlined below. Note that the name of each paper type may vary from journal to journal.

Review and Analysis Papers

Most ASA, CSSA, and SSSA journals accept invited and volunteered review papers. They are often not be presented in the common form for research papers (introduction, methods, results, and discussion). They also typically do not present the results of a single research project. Such papers should not be penalized for following a less-traditional format.

Good review papers provide a synthesis of existing knowledge and give new insights or concepts not previously presented in the literature, or at least not with the same level of detail. One should consider rejecting papers that fail in these areas.

Review articles are not to be considered exhaustive reviews of the literature but should include enough literature review to provide a basis for discussion and interpretation of the topic under consideration.

A good review is often one of the most important ways to advance an area of science. Readers expect a review paper to

- deal with an important subject that needs a scholarly review,
- cover the entire spectrum of the subject, not just the segment the author of the review paper has published papers about,
- present a balanced coverage that is fair to all the work it reviews, and
- add a perspective to the entire subject; contribute significantly to understanding.

Opinion Papers

Opinion papers may be called perspectives or issues papers depending on the journal. They give a broader and often more personal perspective on a subject than a review paper. They may discuss contemporary issues from a combination of scientific, political, legislative, and regulatory perspectives. These papers often have more of a philosophical bent but must still be based on a foundation of good science. They may be invited or volunteered.

The intent of these papers is to stimulate discussion and possibly a rethinking of current views. They can be provocative and controversial. A reviewer or editor who does not agree with a paper's content should

not use that as a reason to recommend its rejection but instead should include constructive comments regarding the logic and arguments used to convey the ideas presented. In addition, the reviewer should evaluate the quality of the writing and make comments as appropriate.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor may contain comments on articles appearing in the journal or general discussions about agronomic, crop, soil, or other pertinent research, according to the nature of the journal. The suggested length of a Letter to the Editor is 1000 words or less. The letter must be approved by the journal editor and may be peer-reviewed. If a letter discusses a published paper, the author of that paper will be invited to submit a response to the comments, which will generally be published with the letter.

Notes

Notes, or short communications, are a separate category of scientific manuscripts that describe research techniques, apparatus, and observations of unique phenomena. These papers also are usually shorter than research papers. For the suggested length of these papers, authors should check the specific journal's instructions to authors.

Occasionally, an editor may believe a paper submitted as a regular research paper will better fit this category, or vice versa. If the author agrees, the manuscript can be moved to or from this category.

Book Reviews

Several of the journals publish book reviews. The editor often handles these or assigns a technical editor to handle the review. Book reviews are not considered scientific articles and do not need to be sent to outside reviewers.

THE REVIEW

The purpose of scientific editing and review is to determine if the research presented in the paper sought information that either was previously not known or not completely understood; that the research was properly designed, accurately conducted, and accurately recorded; and that the results were correctly interpreted and presented completely and accurately.

Scientific Accuracy

Although the primary responsibility for a paper's accuracy and completeness rests with the author(s), the technical editor, associate editor, and reviewers can often provide valuable assistance in the presentation of that information. For example, authors may be too close to the material to present—in a way others can follow—the logic used in approaching the problem.

Errors and ambiguities can be grouped into two general categories: (i) scientific and technical and (ii) grammatical. Although there is substantial

overlap in duties, problems in the first category are the basic responsibility of technical and associate editors and reviewers and those in the second category are the basic responsibility of the headquarters staff. Editors, technical editors, associate editors, and reviewers cannot ignore grammatical problems, however. If an author who is unfamiliar with writing in English submits a manuscript that is nearly unintelligible, editors should not hesitate to send the manuscript back to the author for improvements before beginning serious scientific review.

Once a manuscript is readable, scientific editors and reviewers should give it a thorough review. Specific aspects of the review are outlined in the checklist at the end of this chapter.

Style

The manuscript should follow the ASA, CSSA, SSSA style as outlined in the journal author instructions and the ASA, CSSA, SSSA *Publications Handbook and Style Manual* (https://www.agronomy.org/publications/journals/author-resources/style-manual). General style issues, such as capitalization in titles, heading format, reference style, will be addressed during production if a paper is accepted and so do not need to be noted in the review process. However, scientific style issues, such as the correct use of specialized terminology, statistics, and equations, as well as the use of scientific names and soil series descriptions, are best addressed during the review stage. While scientific styles issues are not a reason for rejection, it is best that authors address them during revision.

Supplemental Information

Supplemental material must undergo peer review and should be submitted along with the original manuscript. A one- or two-sentence description of the supplemental material should be included in the main manuscript before any acknowledgment section. Supplemental tables and figures should be cited in order in the main manuscript.

The Paper's Language

Editorial board members often ask for guidelines as to when it is okay to leave writing problems in an otherwise acceptable manuscript to be addressed at the copyediting stage and when they should insist that the author repair the problem before accepting the paper. It is difficult to provide unequivocal guidelines. Without question, awkward writing is difficult, if not impossible, to interpret. But many scientific reviewers and editors are willing to overlook flawed writing in a manuscript in the interest of publishing the important scientific information expressed in the paper.

There are different degrees of errors in writing. Some can be corrected fairly easily by a professional copy editor; others require the guidance of the author or a scientific editor.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

The location of the error within the paper will often influence the severity of the problems caused by that error. Ambiguity or opacity of language in the introduction damages the effectiveness of a paper because this is where the authors orient their study to similar studies and place their investigation within the context of established knowledge. The same can often be true for the Materials and Methods section. Poor language presentation may cause fewer problems in the Results and Discussion sections, where context has already been established. Similarly, the study's conclusions must be stated clearly, unambiguously, and in a way that is consistent with the preceding sections because this is where the authors are attempting to justify both the performance of the research and the publication of the study. Without a clear presentation here, readers may miss the significance of the study's findings.

When in doubt, determine whether the key concepts and arguments of the study have been adequately expressed. Are the key statements free from ambiguity and vagueness in their meanings? Be less concerned if they are clear but merely not fluent.

Software is used after acceptance to check citation/reference matching. It is not necessary for editors and reviewers to spend a lot of time checking this. Of course, if a key reference is omitted, it is good to mention that to the author.

Errors That Require Correction during the Review Process

Serious defects in scientific writing are those of vagueness, missing information, and missing indications of relationships between pieces of information. Our copy editors are not qualified to correct these sorts of errors without input from authors or scientific editors. Scientific editors therefore are expected to resolve all problems in this category before accepting the paper. The following examples fall into this category.

Vague statement/poor word choice. "Also SOC concentration is more a function of residue and roots (Hanes et al., 1990) after harvest than actual grain yield since virtually no yield can be obtained (corn in dry years, corn after sunflower), yet biomass and residue are produced."

The above statement is unclear as to when or under what conditions no yield can be obtained. With the author's help, this sentence was revised to read: "Also, SOC concentration is more a function of residue and roots (Hanes et al., 1990) remaining after harvest since, at times, little or virtually no yield is obtained (of corn in very dry years, or of corn after sunflower has dried out the soil profile), yet leaf and stem biomass and residue are produced."

Excessively long strings of compound modifiers; adjectival nouns modifying a head noun. "... mixed bed exchange resins..." Does the author mean "mixed-bed exchange resins," or "mixed bed-exchange resins?"

Incomplete comparisons. "It seems reasonable to conclude that the fallow plot should be capable of dissipating nitrate more rapidly." More rapidly than what? Under what conditions?

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook.*

Topic shift from sentence to sentence. In the following example the reader cannot tell which exposure of soils is being referred to. "Denitrification rates under ambient C conditions were higher in the surface 10 cm of the first test plot compared with the control soil but not in the second test plot. Exposure of soil to agricultural runoff has a significant impact on the soil microbial community."

Errors That Copy Editors Routinely Correct

Writing problems are annoying and can make interpretation of statements laborious but can usually be fixed relatively easily by the copy editor after acceptance. These errors can be more significant when they occur in orienting statements and concluding claims, however. Awkward sentences in non-key areas and minor ambiguities even in key areas can be left in the hands of the copy editor.

CHECKLIST FOR DETAILED COMMENTS

Scientific Content

____ *Duplication*. Does the manuscript unnecessarily repeat already published work?

____ *Review of literature*. Is due credit given to relevant contributions? Is the author's contribution placed in its proper perspective in relation to the state of knowledge? Is the number of references adequate, too small, or excessive?

____ *Objectives*. Is the statement of objectives adequate and appropriate?

____ *Methods*. Are the methods appropriate? Have suitable measurements been performed? Have proper control measurements been made? Have the methods been presented in sufficient detail (e.g., not just what reagents were used, but in what manner and for how long, for instance) to allow a competent scientist-reader to repeat the work? If not, are the sources cited where sufficient detail is available?

____ *Calculations*. Randomly select a few instances and verify the calculations made by the author.

____ *Effectiveness of data presentation*. Would data presented in tables be better presented in figures, or vice versa?

____ *Tables and figures*. Are tables and figures understandable and complete apart from the text? Are they scientifically accurate? Are figure parts labeled sufficiently?

____ *Table row and column headings*. Is the interpretation clear, unequivocal, and in SI units?

____ *Table and figure captions*. Do the captions accurately and completely state the content, or could they be improved?

____ *Conclusions*. Are they adequate and supported by the data?

____ *Conjecture*. Does the author clearly distinguish between fact and

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

conjecture? Is the amount of conjecture excessive or too little? As long as they are properly identified, speculation and extrapolation are encouraged.

____ *Appropriate units*. Are SI units (or SI-acceptable units) used throughout? (At their discretion, authors may also use other units as well as the SI—usually parenthetically—in text, tables, and figures.) Note that some journals may require different units.

Scientific Presentation

____ *Title*. Does the title adequately describe the subject of the manuscript, preferably in 12 or fewer words (not including conjunctions and prepositions)? Can the wording be improved, particularly so it does not begin with weak words such as "Effects of"?

____ *Abstract*. Abstracts are the most widely read section of any paper, often being seen without the paper itself. Does the abstract briefly (≤250 words for a full paper, ≤150 words for a note) tell what was done and what was found? More information about abstracts can be found at the end of this list.

____ *Clarity*. Does the author present the information in a relatively simple, straightforward manner that can be understood by a reasonably competent scientist-reader?

____ *Organization*. Does the manuscript develop the subject logically and effectively?

____ *Duplication*. Can the manuscript be shortened without loss of content? Are all figures needed if the same data are also given in tabular form? Is there unnecessary duplication in the text or between the text and tables and figures?

____ *Correspondence of text with tables and figures*. Are all tables and figures referred to in the text? Do statements in the text correspond with the content of tables and figures?

____ *Scientific names*. Are scientific names, with authority, given at first use for plants?

____ *Soil descriptions*. Are soils described at first mention according to the US soil taxonomic system or an appropriate national system for soils outside the United States?

____ *Graphs*. Do they conform to the guidelines outlined in the *Publications Handbook and Style Manual*, including the color policy? Are they properly labeled? Do they contain all observations? Is the plotting of the data accurate?

____ *References*. Is the basic information there, independent of format? Are there obvious errors, such as misspelled names of authors or publications?

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

Manuscript Style

____ *Consistency.* Are all abbreviations and variables defined and used uniformly? If an abbreviation is defined in the paper, is it used more than once? If not, it can often be eliminated.

____ *Abbreviations.* Does the paper have an excessive number of author-made-up abbreviations that hinder ease of reading and interpreting the information? Suggest the author cut back. Are all ad hoc abbreviations defined in a list immediately after the abstract? If not, ask the author to create the list.

____ *Sequence of Tables, Figures, and Equations.* Are all serially numbered items presented in the proper sequence?

____ *Note:* You do not need to check for reference style or citation matching, heading style, and the like.

Abstract

____ Strive for an impersonal, noncritical, and informative account.

____ The structure should move from an introductory statement of the rationale to a clear statement of the objectives or hypotheses through a brief account of the methods to the results and conclusions.

____ Provide rationale or justification for the study. The statement should give a brief account of the purpose, need, and significance of the investigation (hypothesis or how the present work differs from previous work).

____ State the objectives or hypothesis clearly as to what is to be obtained.

____ Give a brief but specific account of the methods, emphasizing departures from the customary.

____ Give the full soil classification if it is a factor in interpreting the results.

____ Identify scientific names of plants.

____ State results succinctly.

____ Outline conclusions or recommendations, if any. Emphasize the significance of the work, conclusions, and recommendations. This may include new theories, interpretations, evaluations, or applications.

____ Use specific figures whenever possible to avoid use of general terms, especially in presenting the method and reporting the results. For example, if two rates of a treatment are used, state what they are.

____ Never cite references.

____ Contain about 200 to 250 words (100 to 150 words for notes).

Plain Language Summaries and Core Ideas, if Present

____ Review for readability and connection to the results and conclusions of the paper.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook.*

Chapter 3

Journal Histories, Management, and Editorial Procedures

The procedures for handling manuscripts and the duties of individual editorial board members vary from journal to journal. This chapter outlines those procedures for each journal. It also gives the histories and makeup of the journals' editorial boards.

Each of the societies, ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, publishes a flagship journal. The three societies also publish additional journals both individually and as copublications of two or more of the societies.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

Contributions to all ASA, CSSA, and SSSA journals should be prepared according to instructions given in the *Publications Handbook and Style Manual* (https://www.agronomy.org/publications/journals/author-resources/style-manual). Each journal's online instructions to authors contains the most recent requirements for manuscript preparation and submission.

Journal manuscripts are submitted via an online manuscript submission system. Upon submission, each paper is assigned a manuscript number, and a record is created in the electronic system that holds all the submission and review information. The author is automatically sent an acknowledgment email upon submission.

The majority of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA journals use the single-anonymous peer-review process, whereby the names of the reviewers are hidden from the author. Some journals, as noted below, use a double-anonymous review process, whereby the names of the reviewers are hidden from the authors and the names of the authors are hidden from the reviewers.

The submission system allows editors, reviewers, and authors to see the current status of articles. The entire review process, documentation and reporting, and correspondence up to the final decision are handled within the submission system.

Each journal follows a similar workflow. Once a paper is submitted, the editor assigns the paper to a technical editor (also referred to as co-editors or senior editors for some journals) or associate editor for those journals without technical editors. If the editor and technical editor determine that the paper should continue in the process, the technical editor assigns an associate editor. The associate editor assigns reviewers via the manuscript submission system.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook.*

The editor or technical editor may decide to reject a paper prior to official review. Reasons to release prior to review are outlined in more detail in Chapter 2.

Most ASA, CSSA, and SSSA journals also publish letters to the editor and book reviews. All letters to the editor and book reviews are submitted via the manuscript submission system. These are reviewed by the editor, although the editor may send letters to the editor out for review depending on the content. If a letter refers to a published paper, a copy of the letter should be sent to the corresponding author of the published paper, inviting a response. If there is a response, it is published along with the letter.

Decision Types

There are two main final decision types: accept and reject. If a paper is rejected, the editor with the authority to make the final decision may reject the paper outright or reject and suggest a transfer to another society journal. Suggesting a transfer is most often done when the editor determines the paper would fit the scope of another society journal. Some society journals have the additional option to suggest a transfer to a nonsociety journal.

Appeals

Should an author feel that the process was implemented incorrectly or that a review was biased or poorly done, the author should first inform the editor of that journal and attempt to resolve the concern at that level. If the concern is not resolved, the author may appeal the decision to the editor(s)-in-chief of that journal. The decision of the editor-in-chief will be final. The appeals process is spelled out further in the ASA-CSSA-SSSA Editorial Policies document.

AGRONOMY JOURNAL

History

Agronomy Journal (AJ) is the official publication of the American Society of Agronomy. It was launched in 1910, three years after the ASA was founded. The first four volumes were titled *Proceedings of the American Society of Agronomy*. (Volume 1 contains papers from 1907, 1908, and 1909.) From 1913 through 1948, the name was *Journal of the American Society of Agronomy*. In 1949, the name changed to *Agronomy Journal*. Published first in annual bound volumes and later at greater frequency, the journal appeared from 1923 through 1960 as a monthly periodical. Since then it has been published bimonthly in print, and since 1998 in both print and online formats. AJ moved to online-only publication in 2013. When *Journal of Production Agriculture* (a joint publication of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA) ceased publication in 1999, the scope of *Agronomy Journal* expanded

to allow publishing of papers that previously appeared in *Journal of Production Agriculture*.

Editorial Board

The AJ editorial board consists of the ASA editor-in-chief, the editor, technical editors who are experts in various areas, associate editors covering numerous subject-matter areas, and the journal program manager (program manager), publications director, and chief executive officer as ex officio members. See Chapter 1 for a general description of the responsibilities of the editorial board.

Editor. The AJ editor is appointed by the ASA editor-in-chief on behalf of the ASA president. After consultation with the ASA editor-in-chief and on behalf of the ASA president, the editor appoints associate editors. The editor may write editorials and solicit manuscripts on special topics.

Technical Editors. Technical editors are appointed by the ASA editor-in-chief on behalf of the ASA president and after consultation with the editor. New technical editor positions may be created only with the approval of the ASA Board of Directors.

Technical editors delegate to associate editors the responsibility for obtaining reviews from qualified peer scientists. Technical editors of AJ are empowered to accept and release papers.

Associate Editors. Under the direction of a technical editor, associate editors are responsible for evaluating in a timely manner the technical and intellectual content and suitability of manuscripts assigned to them. Associate editors are responsible for finding reviewers and corresponding and working with authors to obtain revisions as needed. Associate editors recommend to their technical editor whether a manuscript should be accepted or released.

Workflow

A contribution to AJ must be prepared in a way that will allow it to receive a double-anonymous review.

The editor oversees the peer-review process via the manuscript submission system. Once a paper is submitted, the editor assigns the paper to a technical editor. Prior to the official review, the editor and technical editor may decide that a paper is not ready for review and release it back to the author.

After determining that a manuscript is ready for review, the technical editor assigns the manuscript to an associate editor. If, at this stage, the associate editor feels that the manuscript is not ready for review, they are urged to discuss their concerns with the technical editor before assigning reviewers.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

The associate editor seeks the services of qualified peer reviewers via the manuscript submission system. The associate editor can serve as one of the reviewers of the paper unless the subject matter is too far outside their area of expertise. The associate editor is responsible for obtaining at least two recommendations for acceptance or release of the manuscript and for ensuring that the reviews are completed in a timely manner. Reviewers of AJ manuscripts are requested to complete reviews in 21 days.

Associate editors can decide to return a paper to an author for revision but should never indicate to the corresponding author anything that would guarantee acceptance if certain changes are made.

Corresponding authors are given 30 days to complete minor revisions and 60 days to complete major revisions, after which time the paper is subject to release.

Associate editors do not have the authority to accept or release a paper during the review process. After reaching a final decision about the acceptability of a paper, the associate editor makes a recommendation to the technical editor regarding acceptance or release of the manuscript. When recommending that manuscripts be released, the associate editor should give sufficient reason to the technical editor so the author can be fully informed.

The technical editor reviews the reviewers' comments and the associate editor's recommendation and may accept, modify, or disagree with that recommendation. The technical editor may:

- Accept the paper with no additional changes. When the technical editor makes this decision, the headquarters office and author are notified of the accepted paper and the production process begins.
- Agree that the paper is worthy of publication but disagree that the paper is ready for acceptance and recommend a revision. The technical editor then works with the author—usually through the associate editor—to clear up any points (often involving scientific and technical details). If the revised paper is accepted, the staff and author are notified and production begins.
- Reject the paper, informing the corresponding author of that action and detailing the reason(s) for the release. Depending on the circumstances, the technical editor may encourage the author to clear up any technical problems and resubmit the manuscript for further consideration. Resubmissions should be noted as such by the corresponding author at the time of resubmission.

The editor may make an immediate decision at any time during the process if needed.

After a paper is accepted, journal staff and publisher communicate with the corresponding author throughout the production process. The program manager supervises copyediting of papers approved for publication, typesetting, transmittal of proofs to authors, and publication.

Paper Types

Any paper published in AJ must make a significant contribution to the advancement of knowledge or toward a better understanding of existing agronomic concepts. Articles published in AJ are peer reviewed and report original research findings and technological information on all aspects of agriculture and natural resource sciences. Manuscripts are encouraged that transfer production-oriented information to a wide range of professional agriculturalists, including other disciplines such as animal science, weed science, agricultural economics, entomology, plant pathology, horticulture, and forestry.

Paper types include original articles, review papers, notes and insights, forum, and letters to the editor. Notes and insights may be published regarding apparatus, observations, and experimental techniques. Observations usually are limited to studies and reports of unrepeatable phenomena or other unique circumstances.

Research articles are grouped by subject matter. Manuscript authors are given the opportunity to designate the subject-matter heading under which the article could logically appear. Current subject-matter areas are: agronomic application of genetic resources; agronomy, soils & environmental quality; biofuels; biometry, modeling & statistics; climatology & water management; crop ecology & physiology; crop economics, production & management; organic agriculture & agroecology; pest interactions in agronomic systems; soil fertility & crop nutrition; soil tillage, conservation & management; and urban agriculture.

Forum papers are reviewed by the editor in consultation with one or more technical editors regarding the paper's acceptability for publication. Forum contributions address current agricultural and natural resource issues and questions in a brief, thought-provoking form.

AJ regularly publishes special sections. Guest editors may propose topics and work with the editor in developing the special section. Special sections in AJ are designed to bring to the forefront and promote new areas of research of broad interest to AJ's readership; to highlight and provide a platform for scientific exchange resulting from symposia, collaborative projects, and topical conferences; and/or to provide a periodic overview of the state of the art in various research areas by soliciting contributions from active leaders in the various fields of agronomy. Special sections are usually coordinated by guest editors. Manuscripts follow the same workflow as other AJ articles, with guest editors often taking the role of associate editor and with the journal editor having the final decision regarding acceptance or release.

CROP SCIENCE

History

Crop Science (CS) is the official publication of the Crop Science Society of America. Publication began in January 1961, six years after CSSA

was organized, and has been published in six issues a year since then. Beginning in 1998, it began publishing in both print and online versions. CS moved to online-only publication in 2013.

Editorial Board

The CS editorial board consists of the CSSA editor-in-chief, the editor, technical editors who are experts in various areas, associate editors covering numerous subject-matter areas, and the program manager, publications director, and chief executive officer as ex officio members. See Chapter 1 for a general description of the responsibilities of the editorial board.

Editor. The CS editor is appointed by the CSSA editor-in-chief on behalf of the CSSA president. After consultation with the CSSA editor-in-chief and on behalf of the CSSA president, the editor appoints associate editors. The editor may write editorials and solicit manuscripts on special topics.

Technical Editors. Technical editors are appointed by the CSSA editor-in-chief on behalf of the CSSA president and after consultation with the editor. New technical editor positions may be created only with the approval of the CSSA Board of Directors.

Technical editors delegate to associate editors the responsibility for obtaining reviews from qualified peer scientists. Technical editors of CS are empowered to accept and release papers.

Associate Editors. Under the direction of a technical editor, associate editors are responsible for evaluating in a timely manner the technical and intellectual content and suitability of manuscripts assigned to them. Associate editors are responsible for finding reviewers and corresponding and working with authors to obtain revisions as needed. Associate editors recommend to their technical editor whether a manuscript should be accepted or rejected.

Workflow

The editor oversees the peer-review process via the manuscript submission system. Once a paper is submitted, the editor assigns the paper to a technical editor. Prior to the official review, the editor and technical editor may decide that a paper is not ready for review and release it back to the author.

After determining that a manuscript is ready for review, the technical editor assigns the manuscript to an associate editor. If at this stage, the associate editor feels that the manuscript is not ready for review, they are urged to discuss their concerns with the technical editor before assigning outside reviewers.

The associate editor seeks the services of qualified peer reviewers via the manuscript submission system. The associate editor is responsible for

obtaining at least two recommendations for acceptance or release of the manuscript and for ensuring the reviews are completed in a timely manner. Reviewers of CS manuscripts are requested to complete reviews in 21 days.

Associate editors can decide to return a paper to an author for revision but should never indicate to the corresponding author anything that would guarantee acceptance if certain changes are made.

Corresponding authors are given 30 days to complete minor revisions and 60 days to complete major revisions, after which time their papers are subject to release.

Associate editors do not have the authority to accept or reject a paper during the review process. After reaching a final decision about the acceptability of a paper, the associate editor makes a recommendation to the technical editor regarding acceptance or release of the manuscript. When recommending that manuscripts be released, the associate editor should give sufficient reason to the technical editor so the author can be fully informed.

The technical editor reviews the reviewers' comments and the associate editor's recommendation and may accept, modify, or disagree with that recommendation. The technical editor may:

- Accept the paper with no additional changes. When the technical editor makes this decision, the headquarters office and author are notified of the accepted paper and the production process begins.
- Agree that the paper is worthy of publication but disagree that the paper is ready for acceptance and recommend a revision. The technical editor then works with the author—usually through the associate editor—to clear up any points (often involving scientific and technical details). If the revised paper is accepted, the staff and author are notified and production begins.
- Reject the paper, informing the corresponding author of that action and detailing the reason(s) for the release. Depending on the circumstances, the technical editor may encourage the author to clear up any technical problems and resubmit the manuscript for further consideration. Resubmissions should be noted as such by the corresponding author at the time of resubmission.

The editor may make an immediate decision at any time during the process if needed.

After a paper is accepted, the journal staff and publisher communicate with the corresponding author throughout the production process. The program manager supervises copyediting of papers approved for publication, typesetting, transmittal of proofs to authors, and publication.

Paper Types

CS publishes significant scientific advances in crop science. Manuscripts focus on any aspect of crop science such as agronomy, physiology, breeding, and genetics, and will be classified according to the CSSA division with which they align most closely.

Paper types include reports of original research, reviews, scientific perspectives, and issues. The journal also accepts book reviews and letters to the editor. CS also publishes special collections of articles across its scope, including topical reviews and perspectives.

SOIL SCIENCE SOCIETY OF AMERICA JOURNAL

History

Soil Science Society of America Journal (SSSAJ) is the official publication of the Soil Science Society of America. It was first published as *Soil Science Society of America Proceedings* in 1937, one year after the SSSA was organized. In 1976, the name was changed to *Soil Science Society of America Journal*. It was first published as an annual bound volume. In 1952, it became a quarterly publication, and it has appeared in six issues a year since January 1958. Beginning in 1998, it began publishing both print and online versions. SSSAJ moved to online-only publication in 2013.

Editorial Board

The SSSAJ editorial board consists of the SSSA editor-in-chief, editor, technical editors who are experts in various areas, associate editors covering numerous subject-matter areas, and the program manager, publications director, and chief executive officer as ex officio members. See Chapter 1 for a general description of the responsibilities of the editorial board.

Editor. The SSSAJ editor is appointed by the SSSA editor-in-chief on behalf of the SSSA president. After consultation with the SSSA editor-in-chief and on behalf of the SSSA president, the editor appoints associate editors. The editor may write editorials and solicit manuscripts on special topics.

Technical Editors. Technical editors are appointed by the SSSA editor-in-chief on behalf of the SSSA president and after consultation with the editor. New technical editor positions may be created only with the approval of the SSSA Board of Directors.

Technical editors delegate to associate editors the responsibility for obtaining reviews from qualified peer scientists. Technical editors of SSSAJ are empowered to accept and reject papers.

Associate Editors. Under the direction of a technical editor, associate editors are responsible for evaluating in a timely manner the technical and intellectual content and suitability of manuscripts assigned to them. Technical editors normally delegate to associate editors the responsibility of finding reviewers and corresponding and working with authors to obtain

revisions as needed. Associate editors have the ability to accept manuscripts but not to reject them. When an associate editor recommends that a manuscript be rejected, they consult with the technical editor, who will inform the author of the paper's release.

Workflow

A contribution to SSSAJ must be prepared in a way that will allow it to receive a double-anonymous review.

The editor oversees the peer-review process via the manuscript submission system. Once a paper is submitted to SSSAJ, the editor assigns the paper to a technical editor. Prior to the official review, the editor and technical editor may decide that a paper is not ready for review and release it back to the author.

After determining the paper is ready for review, the technical editor assigns it to an associate editor. If at this time there is still a question about whether a paper is ready for review, the associate editor is urged to discuss any concerns with the technical editor before assigning reviewers.

The associate editor seeks the services of qualified peer reviewers via the manuscript submission system. The associate editor is responsible for obtaining at least two recommendations for acceptance or release of the manuscript and for ensuring the reviews are completed in a timely manner. Reviewers of SSSAJ manuscripts are requested to complete reviews in 21 days.

SSSAJ associate editors have the authority to accept papers for publication but not to reject them. Technical editors can both accept and reject a paper submitted to SSSAJ.

Associate editors can decide to return a paper to an author for revision but should never indicate to the corresponding author anything that would guarantee acceptance if certain changes are made. Corresponding authors are given 30 days to complete minor revisions and 60 days to complete major revisions, after which time their papers are subject to release. The associate editor may:

- Recommend acceptance of the paper with no additional changes. When the associate editor makes this decision, the headquarters office and author are notified of the accepted paper and the production process begins.
- Agree that the paper is worthy of publication but disagree that the paper is ready for acceptance and recommend a revision. The associate editor then works with the author to clear up any points (often involving scientific and technical details). If the revised paper is accepted, staff and the author are notified and production begins.
- Recommend to the technical editor that the paper be released. The technical editor reviews the reviewers' comments and the associate editor's recommendation and may accept, modify, or disagree with that recommendation. If the technical editor agrees with the recommendation,

they inform the corresponding author of that action and detail the reason(s) for the release. Depending on the circumstances, the technical editor may encourage the author to clear up any technical problems and resubmit the manuscript for further consideration. Resubmissions should be noted as such by the corresponding author at the time of resubmission.

If the technical editor disagrees with the associate editor's decision, they may make a recommendation to revise or make a decision to accept. The technical editor may also enlist the help of the editor. The editor can accept, modify, or disagree with the technical editor's recommendation. If the editor suggests further modifications, the technical editor will work with the author, usually through the associate editor, to clear up any points.

After a paper is accepted, the journal staff and publisher communicate with the corresponding author throughout the production process. The program manager supervises copyediting of papers approved for publication, typesetting, transmittal of proofs to authors, and publication.

Paper Types

SSSAJ is the normal channel for publication of papers and notes reporting on original research in the subject-matter divisions or groups of the SSSA. SSSAJ publishes basic and applied soil research covering all areas of soil science in agricultural, forest, wetlands, and urban settings. Reviews, issue papers, commentaries and letters to the editor, book reviews, symposia papers, and papers on the history of soil science may also be published. Issue papers are published on occasion.

SSSAJ also publishes special sections, collections of papers grouped around a specialized topic. Guest editors may propose topics and work with the editor in developing the special section. Special sections in SSSAJ are designed to bring to the forefront and promote new areas of research of broad interest to the journal's readership; to highlight and provide a platform for scientific exchange resulting from symposia, collaborative projects, and topical conferences; and/or to provide a periodic overview of the state of the art in various research areas by soliciting contributions from active leaders in the field of soil science. Special sections usually have guest editors. Manuscripts follow the same workflow as regular submissions, with guest editors usually taking the role of associate editor.

AGRICULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL LETTERS

History

Agricultural & Environmental Letters (A&EL), copublished by ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, is a continuously published online-only open-access journal. A&EL was launched in 2016.

Editorial Board

The A&EL editorial board consists of the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA editors-in-chief, the editor, technical editors who are experts in various subject areas, associate editors covering numerous subject-matter areas, and the program manager, publications director, and chief executive officer as ex officio members. See Chapter 1 for a general description of the responsibilities of the editorial board.

Editor. The A&EL editor is appointed by the ASA editor-in-chief in consultation and agreement with the CSSA and SSSA editors-in-chief and on behalf of the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA presidents. The editor appoints associate editors. The editor may write editorials and solicit manuscripts on special topics.

Technical Editors. Technical editors are appointed by the ASA editor-in-chief after consultation with the editor and in consultation and agreement with the CSSA and SSSA editors-in-chief and on behalf of the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA presidents. New technical editor positions may be created only with the approval of the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Boards of Directors.

Technical editors delegate to associate editors the responsibility for obtaining reviews from qualified peer scientists. Technical editors of A&EL are empowered to accept and reject papers.

Associate Editors. Under the direction of a technical editor, associate editors are responsible for evaluating in a timely manner the technical and intellectual content and suitability of manuscripts assigned to them. Technical editors normally delegate to associate editors the responsibility of finding reviewers and corresponding and working with authors to obtain revisions as needed. Associate editors recommend to their technical editor whether a manuscript should be accepted or rejected.

Workflow

A contribution to A&EL receives a single-anonymous review. A&EL uses an expedited review and publication process.

The editor oversees the peer-review process via the manuscript submission system. Once a paper is submitted to A&EL, the editor assigns the paper to a technical editor. Prior to the official review, the editor and technical editor may decide that a paper is not ready for review and release it back to the author.

After determining that a manuscript is ready for review, the technical editor assigns the manuscript to an associate editor. If at this stage, the associate editor feels that the manuscript is not ready for review, they are urged to discuss their concerns with the technical editor before assigning outside reviewers.

The associate editor invites qualified peer reviewers via the manuscript submission system. The associate editor is responsible for obtaining at least two recommendations for acceptance or release of the manuscript.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

The A&EL board is considered to be a reviewer board, meaning that the associate editor should first ask board members to act as reviewers before turning to outside reviewers. The associate editor often serves as one of the reviewers unless the subject matter is too far outside their area of expertise. The associate editor is responsible for ensuring the reviews are completed in a timely manner. Reviewers of A&EL manuscripts are requested to complete reviews in 10 days.

Associate editors can decide to return a paper to an author for revision but should never indicate to the corresponding author anything that would guarantee acceptance if certain changes are made.

Corresponding authors are given 30 days to complete minor revisions and 60 days to complete major revisions, after which time the paper is subject to release.

Associate editors do not have the authority to accept or release a paper during the review process. After reaching a final decision about the acceptability of a paper, the associate editor makes the recommendation to the technical editor regarding acceptance or release of the manuscript. When recommending that manuscripts be rejected, the associate editor should give sufficient reason to the technical editor so the author can be fully informed.

The technical editor reviews the reviewers' comments and the associate editor's recommendation and may accept, modify, or disagree with that recommendation. The technical editor may:

- Accept the paper with no additional changes. When the technical editor makes this decision, the headquarters office and author are notified of the accepted paper and the production process begins.
- Agree that the paper is worthy of publication but disagree that the paper is ready for acceptance and recommend a revision. The technical editor then works with the author—usually through the associate editor—to clear up any points (often involving scientific and technical details). If the revised paper is accepted, the staff and author are notified and production begins.
- Reject the paper, informing the corresponding author of that action and detailing the reason(s) for the release. Depending on the circumstances, the technical editor may encourage the author to clear up any technical problems and resubmit the manuscript for further consideration. Resubmissions should be noted as such by the corresponding author at the time of resubmission.

The editor may make an immediate decision at any time during the process if needed.

After a paper is accepted, the journal staff and publisher communicate with the corresponding author throughout the production process. The program manager supervises copyediting of papers, layout, transmittal of proofs to authors, and publication.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

Paper Types

Manuscripts in A&EL are published under the following categories: research letters, commentaries, letters to the editor, and editorials. Research letters provide research information and other related information, up to 2500 words in length. Commentaries discuss relevant issues related to science, policy, research trends, business trends, exciting new discoveries, food security, etc. Commentaries can be as long as 2500 words. Letters to the editor are usually no longer than 500 words in length. They can be as long as 1000 words if there is detailed dialogue that results from the papers published in A&EL. Editorials include invited guest editorials on important and cutting-edge topics.

AGROSYSTEMS, GEOSCIENCES & ENVIRONMENT

History

Agrosystems, Geosciences & Environment (AGE), copublished by ASA and CSSA, is an open-access, continuously published, online journal. The journal was launched in 2018. In addition to handling new submissions, AGE acts as a cascade journal, whereby manuscripts rejected by other ASA, CSSA, and SSSA journals because they are not in the scope of the journal, not sufficiently novel, are too regional, or present null results can be transferred to AGE for consideration and peer review.

Editorial Board

The AGE editorial board consists of the ASA and CSSA editors-in-chief, the editor, senior editors who are experts in various areas, associate editors covering numerous subject-matter areas, and the program manager, publications director, and chief executive officer who serve as ex officio members. See Chapter 1 for a general description of the responsibilities of the editorial board.

Editor. The AGE editor is appointed by the ASA editor-in-chief, on behalf of the ASA president and in agreement with the CSSA editor-in-chief and president. The editor appoints associate editors. The editor may write editorials and solicit manuscripts on special topics.

Senior Editors. Senior editors are appointed by the ASA editor-in-chief after consultation with the editor and in consultation and agreement with the CSSA editor-in-chief and on behalf of the ASA and CSSA presidents. New senior editor positions may be created only with the approval of the ASA and CSSA Boards of Directors.

Senior editors delegate to associate editors the responsibility for obtaining reviews from qualified peer scientists. Senior editors of AGE are empowered to accept and release papers.

Associate Editors. Under the direction of a senior editor, associate editors are responsible for evaluating in a timely manner the technical and intellectual content and suitability of manuscripts assigned to them. Associate editors are responsible for finding reviewers and corresponding

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

and working with authors to obtain revisions as needed. Associate editors recommend to their senior editor whether a manuscript should be accepted or released.

Workflow

A contribution to AGE receives a single-anonymous review.

The editor oversees the peer-review process via the manuscript submission system. Once a paper is submitted to AGE, the editor assigns the paper to a senior editor. Prior to the official review, the editor and senior editor may decide that a paper is not ready for review and release it back to the author.

After determining that a manuscript is ready for review, the senior editor assigns the manuscript to an associate editor. If at this stage, the associate editor feels that the manuscript is not ready for review, they are urged to discuss their concerns with the technical editor before assigning outside reviewers

The associate editor invites qualified peer reviewers via the manuscript submission system. The associate editor is responsible for obtaining at least two recommendations for acceptance or release of the manuscript. The associate editor often serves as one of the reviewers unless the subject matter is too far outside their area of expertise. The associate editor is responsible for ensuring the reviews are completed in a timely manner. Reviewers of AGE manuscripts are requested to complete reviews in 21 days.

Associate editors can decide to return a paper to an author for revision but should never indicate to the corresponding author anything that would guarantee acceptance if certain changes are made.

Corresponding authors are given 30 days to complete minor revisions and 60 days to complete major revisions, after which time the paper is subject to release.

Associate editors do not have the authority to accept or reject a paper during the review process. After reaching a final decision about the acceptability of a paper, the associate editor makes a recommendation to the senior editor regarding acceptance or release of the manuscript. When recommending that manuscripts be released, the associate editor should give sufficient reason to the senior editor so the author can be fully informed.

The senior editor reads the reviewers' comments and the associate editor's recommendation and may accept, modify, or disagree with that recommendation. The senior editor may:

- Accept the paper with no additional changes. When the senior editor makes this decision, the headquarters office and author are notified of the accepted paper and the production process begins.
- Agree that the paper is worthy of publication but disagree that the paper is ready for acceptance and recommend a revision. The senior editor then works with the author—usually through the associate editor—to

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

clear up any points (often involving scientific and technical details). If the revised manuscript is accepted, the staff and author are notified and production begins.

• Reject the paper, informing the corresponding author of that action and detailing the reason(s) for the release. Depending on the circumstances, the senior editor may encourage the author to clear up any technical problems and resubmit the manuscript for further consideration. Resubmissions should be noted as such by the corresponding author at the time of resubmission.

The editor may make an immediate decision at any time during the process if needed.

After a paper is accepted, the journal staff and publisher communicate with the corresponding author throughout the production process. The program manager supervises copyediting of papers approved for publication, layout, transmittal of proofs to authors, and publication.

Paper Types

Articles published in AGE report original research findings and technological information on all aspects of agriculture, plant, environmental, and soil sciences. Paper types include original research articles in the areas of agrosystems, geosciences, environment, or statistics.

CROP, FORAGE & TURFGRASS MANAGEMENT

History

Crop, Forage & Turfgrass Management (CFTM), launched in 2015, is an online journal copublished by ASA and CSSA. Prior to 2015, CFTM existed as the separate journals *Applied Turfgrass Science*, *Crop Management*, and *Forage & Grazinglands.*

Editorial Board

The CFTM editorial board consistsof the ASA and CSSA editors-in-chief, the editor, technical editors, associate editors, and the program manager, publications director, and chief executive officer as ex officio members. See Chapter 1 for a general description of the responsibilities of the editorial board.

Editor. The CFTM editor is appointed by the CSSA editor-in-chief in consultation and agreement with the ASA editor-in-chief and on behalf of the ASA and CSSA presidents. The editor appoints associate editors. The editor may write editorials and solicit manuscripts on special topics.

Technical Editors. Technical editors are appointed by the CSSA editor-in-chief in consultation and agreement with the ASA editor-in-chief and on behalf of the ASA and CSSA presidents after consultation with the editor.

New technical editor positions may be created only with the approval of the ASA and CSSA Boards of Directors.

Technical editors delegate to associate editors the responsibility for obtaining reviews from qualified peer scientists. Technical editors of CFTM are empowered to accept and release papers.

Associate Editors. Under the direction of a technical editor, associate editors are responsible for evaluating in a timely manner the technical and intellectual content and suitability of manuscripts assigned to them. Technical editors normally delegate to associate editors the responsibility of finding reviewers and corresponding and working with authors to obtain revisions as needed. Associate editors recommend to their technical editor whether a manuscript should be accepted or released.

Workflow

A contribution to CFTM receives a single-anonymous review.

The editor oversees the peer-review process via the manuscript submission system. Once a paper is submitted to CFTM, the editor assigns the paper to a technical editor. Prior to the official review, the editor and technical editor may decide that a paper is not ready for review and release it back to the author.

After determining that a manuscript is ready for review, the technical editor assigns the manuscript to an associate editor. If, at this stage, the associate editor feels that the manuscript is not ready for review, they are urged to discuss their concerns with the technical editor before assigning outside reviewers.

The associate editor invites qualified peer reviewers via the manuscript submission system. The associate editor can serve as one of the reviewers of the paper unless the subject matter is too far outside their area of expertise. The associate editor is responsible for obtaining at least two recommendations for acceptance or release of the manuscript and for ensuring that the reviews are completed in a timely manner. Reviewers of CFTM manuscripts are requested to complete their reviews in 21 days.

Associate editors can decide to return a paper to an author for revision but should never indicate to the corresponding author anything that would guarantee acceptance if certain changes are made.

Corresponding authors are given 30 days to complete minor revisions and 60 days to complete major revisions, after which time the paper is subject to release.

Associate editors do not have the authority to accept or reject a paper during the review process. After reaching a final decision about the acceptability of a paper, the associate editor makes a recommendation to the technical editor regarding acceptance or release of the manuscript. When recommending that manuscripts be released, the associate editor should give sufficient reason to the technical editor so the author can be fully informed.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

The technical editor reviews the reviewers' comments and the associate editor's recommendation and may accept, modify, or disagree with that recommendation. The technical editor may:

- Accept the paper with no additional changes. When the technical editor makes this decision, the headquarters office and author are notified of the accepted paper and the production process begins.
- Agree that the paper is worthy of publication but disagree that the paper is ready for acceptance and recommend a revision. The technical editor then works with the author—usually through the associate editor—to clear up any points (often involving scientific and technical details). If the revised manuscript is accepted, the staff and author are notified and production begins.
- Reject the paper, informing the corresponding author of that action and detailing the reason(s) for the release. Depending on the circumstances, the technical editor may encourage the author to clear up any technical problems and resubmit the manuscript for further consideration. Resubmissions should be noted as such by the corresponding author at the time of resubmission.

The editor may make an immediate decision at any time during the process if needed.

After a paper is accepted, the journal staff and publisher communicate with the corresponding author throughout the production process. The program manager supervises copyediting of papers, layout, transmittal of proofs to authors, and publication.

Paper Types

CFTM is a peer-reviewed, international, journal covering all aspects of applied crop, forage and grazinglands, and turfgrass management. The journal serves the professions related to the management of crops, forages and grazinglands, and turfgrass by publishing original articles, brief reports, reviews, and diagnostic and management guides that are beneficial to researchers, practitioners, educators, and industry representatives.

Original articles and brief reports are published in the topical categories applied turfgrass science, crop management, and forage & grazinglands.

Original articles describe work that represents a significant advance in the understanding of a particular issue and that leads to practical solutions to existing problems. Articles should not exceed 3000 words, excluding references.

Brief reports are short articles about new findings and recommendations relevant to the journal's subject matter area. They are limited to 1000 words, excluding title, author names, affiliations, references, tables, and figures.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

Reviews summarize and analyze a topic of importance to the journal's subject matter area for nonspecialists. It is recommended that the word count not exceed 5000 words, excluding references.

Diagnostic guides describe the methods used to identify nutrient and other abiotic disorders; diseases and their causal agents; and insect, nematode, or weed pests. It is recommended that the word count not exceed 5000 words, excluding references.

Management guides expand and update the knowledge base of crop, sod, or forage producers, industry representatives, turf and grazingland managers, conservationists, Extension specialists, county agents, consultants, and other adult educators. It is recommended that the word count not exceed 5000 words, excluding references.

JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

History

The *Journal of Environmental Quality* (JEQ) is published jointly by ASA, CSSA, and SSSA. The first issue was published in January 1972 and was published quarterly until 1993. It has been published in six issues a year since 1994. Beginning in 1998, JEQ began publishing in both print and online versions. JEQ moved to online-only publication in 2013.

Editorial Board

The JEQ editorial board consists of the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA editors-in-chief, the editor, technical editors who are experts in various areas, associate editors covering numerous subject-matter areas, and the program manager, publications director, and chief executive officer as ex officio members. See Chapter 1 for a general description of the responsibilities of the editorial board.

Editor. The JEQ editor is appointed by the ASA editor-in-chief in consultation and agreement with the CSSA and SSSA editors-in-chief and on behalf of the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA presidents. The editor appoints associate editors. The editor may write editorials and solicit manuscripts on special topics.

Technical Editors. Technical editors are appointed by the ASA editor-in-chief after consultation with the editor and in consultation and agreement with the CSSA and SSSA editors-in-chief and on behalf of the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA presidents. New technical editor positions may be created only with the approval of the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Boards of Directors.

Technical editors delegate to associate editors the responsibility for obtaining reviews from qualified peer scientists. Technical editors of JEQ recommend to the editor whether a manuscript should be accepted or released.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

Associate Editors. Under the direction of a technical editor, associate editors are responsible for evaluating in a timely manner the technical and intellectual content and suitability of manuscripts assigned to them. Technical editors normally delegate to associate editors the responsibility of finding reviewers and corresponding and working with authors to obtain revisions as needed. Associate editors recommend to their technical editor whether a manuscript should be accepted or released.

Workflow

A contribution to JEQ receives a single-anonymous review.

The editor oversees the peer-review process via the manuscript submission system. Once a paper is submitted to JEQ, the editor assigns it to a technical editor. Prior to the official review, the editor and technical editor may decide that a paper is not ready for review and release it back to the author.

After determining that a manuscript is ready for review, the technical editor assigns the manuscript to an associate editor. If, at this stage, the associate editor feels that the manuscript is not ready for review, they are urged to discuss their concerns with the technical editor before assigning outside reviewers.

The associate editor seeks the services of qualified peer reviewers via the manuscript submission system. The associate editor can serve as one of the reviewers of the paper unless the subject matter is too far outside their area of expertise. The associate editor is responsible for obtaining at least two recommendations for acceptance or release of the manuscript and for ensuring the reviews are completed in a timely manner. Reviewers of JEQ manuscripts are requested to complete reviews in 21 days.

Associate editors can decide to return a paper to an author for revision but should never indicate to the corresponding author anything that would guarantee acceptance if certain changes are made.

Corresponding authors are given 30 days to complete minor revisions and 60 days to complete major revisions, after which time the paper is subject to release.

Associate editors do not have the authority to accept or release a paper during the review process. After reaching a final decision about the acceptability of a paper, the associate editor makes a recommendation to the technical editor regarding acceptance or release of the manuscript. When recommending that a manuscript be released, the associate editor should give sufficient reason to the technical editor so that the author can be fully informed.

The technical editor notifies the editor of the recommendation.

The technical editor reviews the reviewers' comments and the associate editor's recommendation and may accept, modify, or disagree with that recommendation. The technical editor may:

- Recommend acceptance of the paper with no additional changes.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

- Agree that the paper is worthy of publication but disagree that the paper is ready for acceptance and recommend a revision. The technical editor then works with the author—usually through the associate editor—to clear up any points (often involving scientific and technical details).
- Recommend that the paper be rejected, informing the editor of that recommendation and detailing the reason(s) for the release.

The editor makes the final decision regarding the manuscript and can accept, modify, or disagree with the technical editor's recommendation. If the editor suggests further modifications, the technical editor will work with the author, usually through the associate editor, to clear up any points. If the recommendation is for release and depending on the circumstances, the editor may encourage the author to clear up any technical problems and resubmit the manuscript for further consideration. Resubmissions should be noted as such by the corresponding author at the time of resubmission.

The editor may make an immediate decision at any time during the process if needed.

The editor notifies the corresponding author of the final decision. When the editor accepts a manuscript, the headquarters office and author are notified of the accepted paper and the production process begins.

After a paper is accepted, the journal staff and publisher communicate with the corresponding author throughout the production process. The program manager supervises copyediting of papers approved for publication, typesetting, transmittal of proofs to authors, and publication.

Paper Types

Articles in JEQ cover various aspects of anthropogenic impacts on the environment, including agricultural, terrestrial, atmospheric, and aquatic systems, with emphasis on the understanding of underlying processes rather than monitoring.

Contributions reporting original research or reviews and analyses dealing with some aspect of environmental quality in natural and agricultural ecosystems are accepted from all disciplines for consideration by the editorial board.

Paper types include technical reports, reviews and analyses, perspectives, technical notes, and datasets. Letters to the editor are also accepted. Reviews and analyses papers and book reviews may be invited by the editor. Technical reports, dataset papers, and technical notes have a word limit of 7000 words, excluding references and where each figure and table count as 200 word equivalents. Review and analysis and issue papers have a suggested word limit of 12,000.

Technical reports are grouped by subject matter. These subject areas are periodically reviewed by the JEQ editorial board and are subject to change. The current subject-matter areas include atmospheric pollutants

and trace gases, biodegradation and bioremediation, ecological risk assessment, ecosystem restoration, environmental microbiology, environmental models, modules, and datasets, groundwater quality, landscape and watershed processes, plant and environment interactions, organic compounds in the environment, surface water quality, trace elements in the environment, urban pollutants, vadose zone transport processes and chemical transport, waste management, and wetlands and aquatic processes.

JEQ regularly publishes special sections. Guest editors may propose topics and work with the editor in developing the special section. Special sections in JEQ are designed to bring to the forefront and promote new areas of research of broad interest to the journal's readership; to highlight and provide a platform for scientific exchange resulting from symposia, collaborative projects, and topical conferences; and/or to provide a periodic overview of the state of the art in various research areas by soliciting contributions from active leaders in the field of environmental quality. Special sections usually have guest editors. Manuscripts follow the same workflow as other JEQ articles, with guest editors often taking the role of associate editor and with the journal editor having the final decision regarding acceptance or release.

JOURNAL OF PLANT REGISTRATIONS

History

Journal of Plant Registrations (JPR) is the official registration publication of CSSA. It was first published in May 2007 in both print and online versions. Previously, plant registrations were published as short notes in *Agronomy Journal* and later in *Crop Science*. JPR moved to online-only publication in 2013. It is published in three issues per year.

JPR works in cooperation with the USDA-ARS's National Germplasm Resources Laboratory of the National Plant Germplasm System and the National Laboratory for Genetic Resources Preservation to ensure assignment of a registration number to registered material, issue certificates of registration, confirm a permanent record file in the Germplasm Resources Information Network database, and ensure that the list of all registered materials is available to users worldwide.

Editorial Board

JPR is prepared by an editorial board consisting of the CSSA editor-in-chief, the editor, associate editors, and the program manager, publications director, and chief executive officer as ex officio members. See Chapter 1 for a general description of the responsibilities of the editorial board.

Editor. The JPR editor is appointed by the CSSA editor-in-chief on behalf of the CSSA president. The editor appoints associate editors. The editor may write editorials and solicit manuscripts on special topics.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

The editor delegates to associate editors the responsibility for obtaining reviews from qualified peer scientists.

Associate Editors. Under the direction of the editor, associate editors are responsible for evaluating in a timely manner the technical and intellectual content and suitability of manuscripts assigned to them. Associate editors recommend to the editor whether a manuscript should be accepted or released.

Workflow

A contribution to JPR receives a single-anonymous review.

The editor oversees the peer-review process via the manuscript submission system. Once a paper is submitted to JPR, the editor assigns the paper to an associate editor. Prior to the official review, the editor may decide that a paper is not ready for review and release it back to the author.

After determining that a manuscript is ready for review, the editor assigns the manuscript to an associate editor. If, at this stage, the associate editor feels that the manuscript is not ready for review, they are urged to discuss their concerns with the editor before assigning outside reviewers.

The associate editor invites qualified peer reviewers via the manuscript submission system. The associate editor can serve as one of the reviewers of the paper unless the subject matter is too far outside their area of expertise. The associate editor is responsible for obtaining at least two recommendations for acceptance or release of the manuscript and for ensuring that the reviews are completed in a timely manner. Reviewers of JPR manuscripts are requested to complete reviews in 21 days.

Associate editors can decide to return a paper to an author for revision but should never indicate to the corresponding author anything that would guarantee acceptance if certain changes are made.

Corresponding authors are given 30 days to complete minor revisions and 60 days to complete major revisions, after which time the paper is subject to release.

Associate editors do not have the authority to accept or reject a paper during the review process. After reaching a final decision about the acceptability of a paper, the associate editor makes a recommendation to the editor regarding acceptance or release of the manuscript. When recommending that manuscripts be rejected, the associate editor should give sufficient reason to the editor so that the author can be fully informed.

The editor reviews the reviewers' comments and the associate editor's recommendation and may accept, modify, or disagree with that recommendation. The editor may:

- Accept the paper with no additional changes. When the editor makes this decision, the headquarters office and author are notified of the accepted paper and the production process may begin.

- Agree that the paper is worthy of publication but disagree that the paper is ready for acceptance and recommend a revision. The editor then works with the author—usually through the associate editor—to clear up any points (often involving scientific and technical details). If the revised manuscript is accepted, the staff and author are notified and production may begin.
- Reject the paper, informing the corresponding author of that action and detailing the reason(s) for the release. Depending on the circumstances, the editor may encourage the author to clear up any technical problems and resubmit the manuscript for further consideration. Resubmissions should be noted as such by the corresponding author at the time of resubmission.

The editor may make an immediate decision at any time during the process if needed.

After a paper is accepted, the journal staff and publisher communicates with the corresponding author throughout the production process. Note that registration articles enter the production process only after the PI and registration numbers have been assigned by the USDA. The program manager supervises copyediting of papers, layout, transmittal of proofs to authors, and publication.

Paper Types

JPR publishes rigorously peer-reviewed research describing the development of new plant genotypes with enhanced nutrition, productivity, quality, and/or genetic diversity. The journal is the premier international venue for plant breeders, geneticists, and genome biologists to publish research describing new and novel plant cultivars, germplasms, parental lines, genetic stocks, and genomic mapping populations. In addition to the main audience of agricultural scientists, registration articles can serve as supplementary resources for policy makers, humanitarian organizations, and biomedical and nutritional scientists.

JPR publishes cultivar, germplasm, parental line, genetic stock, and mapping population registration manuscripts, keeping breeders informed about new advances in the genetic diversity of crops. JPR also encourages and accepts descriptions of plant genetic materials that have made a major impact on agricultural security (review and analysis), as well as short manuscripts characterizing accessions held in national and international plant germplasm collection systems (descriptions of plant genetic materials).

Registration of genetic materials protected by patents, plant variety protection, or other instruments is encouraged by CSSA and JPR. The requirements are as follows: "To be registered, plant material must be available for use as a source material for research and breeding. Both nonexclusive and exclusive releases must be made available to the public without restriction upon expiry of protections (such as Patents, Plant Variety Protection, or Material Transfer Agreements), which may not exceed 20

years." It is the authors' responsibility to state the form of restriction and the way to access the material during the period of restricted use.

NATURAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

History

Natural Sciences Education (NSE) is an outgrowth of the agronomic education section formerly published in *Agronomy Journal*. It was established as a separate journal by ASA in 1971 under the title *Journal of Agronomic Education*. In 1992, it was given the name *Journal of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Education* when its scope was expanded and a number of organizations were brought in as cooperators. The title was changed to *Natural Sciences Education* in 2013 to widen the scope further and add more cooperators.

NSE was published twice yearly from 1971 through 1997. Beginning in 1998, articles were published in both online and print versions. NSE became online only starting in 2013, and at the end of each year, the papers for that year were collected and published in an annual volume. Beginning in 2021, NSE returned to twice-yearly issues.

Editorial Board

The editorial board of NSE consists of the ASA editor-in-chief, the editor, technical editors, associate editors, and the program manager, publications director, and chief executive officer as ex officio members. See Chapter 1 for a general description of the responsibilities of the editorial board.

Editor. The NSE editor is appointed by the ASA editor-in-chief on behalf of the ASA president. After consultation with the ASA editor-in-chief and on behalf of the ASA president, the editor appoints associate editors. The editor delegates to associate editors the responsibility for obtaining reviews from qualified peer scientists. The editor may write editorials and solicit manuscripts on special topics.

Technical Editors. Technical editors are appointed by the journal editor after consultation with the ASA editor-in-chief and on behalf of the ASA president. New technical editor positions may be created only with the approval of the ASA Board of Directors.

Technical editors delegate to associate editors the responsibility for obtaining reviews from qualified peer scientists. NSE technical editors of are empowered to accept and reject papers.

Associate Editors. Under the direction of a technical editor, associate editors are responsible for evaluating in a timely manner the technical and intellectual content and suitability of manuscripts assigned to them. Associate editors recommend to their technical editor whether a manuscript should be accepted or rejected.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

Workflow

A contribution to NSE receives a single-anonymous review.

The editor oversees the peer-review process via the online manuscript submissions system. Once a paper is submitted, the editor assigns the paper to a technical editor. Prior to the official review, the editor and technical editor may decide that a paper is not ready for review and release it back to the author.

After determining that a manuscript is ready for review, the technical editor assigns the manuscript to an associate editor. If at this stage the associate editor feels that the manuscript is not ready for review, they are urged to discuss their concerns with the technical editor before assigning reviewers.

The associate editor seeks the services of qualified peer reviewers via the electronic submission system. The associate editor can serve as one of the reviewers of the paper unless the subject matter is too far outside their area of expertise. The associate editor is responsible for obtaining at least two recommendations for acceptance or release of the manuscript and for ensuring the reviews are completed in a timely manner. Reviewers of NSE manuscripts are requested to complete reviews in 21 days.

Associate editors can decide to return a paper to an author for revision (major or minor) but should never indicate to the corresponding author anything that would guarantee acceptance if certain changes are made.

Corresponding authors are given 30 days to complete minor revisions and 60 days to complete major revisions, after which time their papers are subject to release by the editor.

Associate editors do not have the authority to accept or reject a paper during the review process. After reaching a final decision about the acceptability of a paper, the associate editor makes a recommendation to the technical editor regarding acceptance or release of the manuscript. When recommending that manuscripts be rejected, the associate editor should give sufficient reason to the technical editor so the author can be fully informed.

The technical editor reviews the reviewers' comments and the associate editor's recommendation and may accept, modify, or disagree with that recommendation. The technical editor may:

- Accept the paper with no additional changes. When this recommendation is selected, the headquarters office and author are notified of the accepted paper and the production process begins.
- Determine that the paper is worthy of publication but not ready for acceptance and recommend a revision. The technical editor then works with the author—usually through the associate editor—to clear up any points (often involving scientific and technical details). If the revised paper is accepted, staff and author are notified and production begins.
- Reject the paper, informing the corresponding author of that action and detailing the reason(s) for the release. Depending on the circumstances,

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

the technical editor may encourage the author to clear up any technical problems and resubmit the manuscript for further consideration. Resubmissions should be noted as such by the corresponding author at the time of resubmission.

The editor may make an immediate decision at any time during the process if needed.

After a paper is accepted, the journal staff and publisher communicate with the corresponding author throughout the production process. The program manager supervises copyediting of papers, layout, transmittal of proofs to authors, and publication.

Paper Types

NSE accepts reports of original studies pertaining to concepts of resident, extension, and industrial education in various disciplines. This includes analysis and synthesis of existing knowledge or research, instructional techniques and methods, surveys of instruction, and other studies that contribute to the development or better understanding of educational efforts. Reviews of comprehensive and well-defined scope are acceptable. Manuscripts based mainly on personal philosophy or opinion are acceptable if they conform to the above criteria.

Original articles are published in the areas of animal science, ecology, natural resources, agronomy, the environment, entomology, and more. Table of contents headings in the journal are: Graduate Education, Undergraduate Education, K–12 Education, Extension Education, Research, Notes, and Web Lessons and Learning Activities. Authors are given the opportunity to designate the subject matter heading under which the article could logically appear. Other types of manuscripts published in NSE include case studies, computer software articles, profiles, and letters to the editor.

THE PLANT GENOME

History

The Plant Genome (TPG), published by CSSA, was first published as a *Crop Science* supplement to the November–December 2006 issue. *The Plant Genome* was published as a separate journal in July 2008 in both print and online versions. TPG moved to online-only publication in 2013. Previously published in three issues per year, TPG began publishing in four issues per year beginning in 2022. TPG is fully open access.

Editorial Board

The TPG editorial board consists of the CSSA editor-in-chief, the editor, technical editors, associate editors, and the program manager, publications director, and chief executive officer as ex officio members. See

Chapter 1 for a general description of the responsibilities of the editorial board.

Editor. The TPG editor is appointed by the CSSA editor-in-chief on behalf of the CSSA president. After consultation with the CSSA editor-in-chief and on behalf of the CSSA president, the editor appoints associate editors. The editor may write editorials and solicit manuscripts on special topics.

Technical Editors. Technical editors are appointed by the CSSA editor-in-chief on behalf of the CSSA president and after consultation with the editor. New technical editor positions may be created only with the approval of the CSSA Board of Directors.

Technical editors delegate to associate editors the responsibility for obtaining reviews from qualified peer scientists. TPG technical editors are empowered to accept and release papers.

Associate Editors. Under the direction of a technical editor, associate editors are responsible for evaluating in a timely manner the technical and intellectual content and suitability of manuscripts assigned to them. Associate editors are responsible for finding reviewers and corresponding and working with authors to obtain revisions as needed. Associate editors recommend to the editor whether a manuscript should be accepted or released.

Workflow

A contribution to TPG receives a single-anonymous review.

The editor oversees the peer-review process via the manuscript submission system. Once a paper is submitted, the editor assigns the paper to a technical editor. Prior to the official review, the editor may decide that a paper is not ready for review and release it back to the author.

After determining that a manuscript is ready for review, the technical editor assigns the manuscript to an associate editor. If at this stage, the associate editor feels that the manuscript is not ready for review, they are urged to discuss their concerns with the technical editor before assigning outside reviewers.

The associate editor seeks the services of qualified peer reviewers via the manuscript submission system. The associate editor is responsible for obtaining at least two recommendations for acceptance or release of the manuscript and for ensuring the reviews are completed in a timely manner. Reviewers of TPG manuscripts are requested to complete reviews in 14 days.

Associate editors can decide to return a paper to an author for revision but should never indicate to the corresponding author anything that would guarantee acceptance if certain changes are made.

Corresponding authors are given 30 days to complete minor revisions and 60 days to complete major revisions, after which time their papers are subject to release.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

Associate editors do not have the authority to accept or reject a paper during the review process. After reaching a final decision about the acceptability of a paper, the associate editor makes the recommendation to the technical editor regarding acceptance or release of the manuscript. When recommending that manuscripts be released, the associate editor should give sufficient reason to the technical editor so the author can be fully informed.

The technical editor reviews the reviewers' comments and the associate editor's recommendation and may accept, modify, or disagree with that recommendation. The technical editor may:

- Accept the paper with no additional changes. When the technical editor selects this recommendation, the headquarters office and author are notified of the accepted paper.
- Agree that the paper is worthy of publication but disagree that the paper is ready for acceptance and recommend a revision. The technical editor then works with the author—usually through the associate editor—to clear up any points (often involving scientific and technical details). If the revised paper is accepted, the staff and author are notified and production begins.
- Reject the paper, informing the corresponding author of that action and detailing the reason(s) for the release. Depending on the circumstances, the technical editor may encourage the author to clear up any technical problems and resubmit the manuscript for further consideration. Resubmissions should be noted as such by the corresponding author at the time of resubmission.

The editor may make an immediate decision at any time during the process if needed.

After a paper is accepted, the journal staff and publisher communicate with the corresponding author throughout the production process. The program manager supervises copyediting of papers approved for publication, typesetting, transmittal of proofs to authors, and publication.

Paper Types

TPG publishes original research investigating all aspects of plant genomics including genome biology, functional genomics, genomic analyses of important traits, genomic resources, genomics-assisted breeding, and genome engineering. Technical breakthroughs reporting improvements in the efficiency and speed of acquiring and interpreting plant genomics data are also considered. Papers in TPG are under the following categories: original research, review articles, resources, perspectives, technical advances, data articles, and letters to the editor.

THE PLANT PHENOME JOURNAL

History

The Plant Phenome Journal (TPPJ), copublished by ASA and CSSA, is a continuously published, online-only, open access journal. TPPJ is a transdisciplinary journal publishing original research, interpretations, and datasets investigating all aspects of plant phenomics. The journal was launched in 2017.

Editorial Board

The editorial board of TPPJ consists of the ASA and CSSA editors-in-chief, the editor, technical editors, associate editors, and the program manager, publications director, and chief executive officer as ex officio members. See Chapter 1 for a general description of the responsibilities of the editorial board.

Editor. The TPPJ editor is appointed by the ASA editor-in-chief in consultation and agreement with the CSSA editor-in-chief and on behalf of the ASA and CSSA presidents.

After consultation with the ASA and CSSA editors-in-chief and on behalf of the ASA and CSSA presidents, the editor appoints technical and associate editors. The editor may write editorials and solicit manuscripts on special topics.

Technical Editors. Technical editors are appointed by the journal editor after consultation with the ASA and CSSA editors-in-chief and on behalf of the ASA president. New technical editor positions may be created only with the approval of the ASA and CSSA Boards of Directors.

Technical editors delegate to associate editors the responsibility for obtaining reviews from qualified peer scientists. TPPJ technical editors recommend to the editor whether a manuscript should be accepted or rejected.

Associate Editors. Under the direction of a technical editor, associate editors are responsible for evaluating in a timely manner the technical and intellectual content and suitability of manuscripts assigned to them. Associate editors recommend to their technical editor whether a manuscript should be accepted or rejected.

Workflow

Papers submitted to TPPJ undergo a single-anonymous review process.

The editor oversees the peer-review process via the manuscript submission system. Once a paper is submitted, the editor assigns the paper to a technical editor. Prior to the official review, the editor and technical editor may decide that a paper is not ready for review and release it back to the author.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook.*

After determining that a manuscript is ready for review, the technical editor assigns the manuscript to an associate editor. If at this stage the associate editor feels that the manuscript is not ready for review, they are urged to discuss their concerns with the technical editor before assigning reviewers.

The associate editor seeks the services of qualified peer reviewers via the manuscript submission system. The associate editor can serve as one of the reviewers of the paper unless the subject matter is too far outside their area of expertise. The associate editor is responsible for obtaining at least two recommendations for acceptance or release of the manuscript and for ensuring the reviews are completed in a timely manner. Reviewers of TPPJ manuscripts are requested to complete reviews in 21 days.

Associate editors can decide to return a paper to an author for revision (major or minor) but should never indicate to the corresponding author anything that would guarantee acceptance if certain changes are made. Corresponding authors are given 30 days to complete minor revisions and 60 days to complete major revisions, after which time their papers are subject to release by the editor.

Associate editors do not have the authority to accept or reject a paper during the review process. After reaching a final decision about the acceptability of a paper, the associate editor makes a recommendation to the technical editor regarding acceptance or release of the manuscript. When recommending that manuscripts be rejected, the associate editor should give sufficient reason to the technical editor so the author can be fully informed.

The technical editor reviews the reviewers' comments and the associate editor's recommendation and may accept, modify, or disagree with that recommendation. The technical editor may:

- Accept the paper with no additional changes. When this recommendation is selected, the headquarters office and author are notified of the accepted paper and the production process begins.
- Determine that the paper is worthy of publication but not ready for acceptance and recommend a revision. The technical editor then works with the author—usually through the associate editor—to clear up any points (often involving scientific and technical details). If the revised paper is accepted, staff and author are notified and production begins.
- Reject the paper, informing the corresponding author of that action and detailing the reason(s) for the release. Depending on the circumstances, the technical editor may encourage the author to clear up any technical problems and resubmit the manuscript for further consideration. Resubmissions should be noted as such by the corresponding author at the time of resubmission.

The editor may make an immediate decision at any time during the process if needed.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

After a paper is accepted, the journal staff and publisher communicate with the corresponding author throughout the production process. The program manager supervises copyediting of papers approved for publication, typesetting, transmittal of proofs to authors, and publication.

Paper Types

Contributions to TPPJ may be original article, review, technical note, data article, commentary, methods and techniques, and protocol papers, as well as letters to the editor. Original articles report breakthrough research in applications domains and new technological advancements. Reviews synthesize across crops, disciplines, and institutions. Technical notes are short articles (usually 4000 words or less) primarily concerned with specific methodological advancements that improve plant phenomics. This is a good fit for describing new sensors, software, techniques, and other technologies that do not yet have substantial biological findings or impact from application.

Methods and techniques and data articles are limited to 2000 words, including figures, where each figure is considered equivalent to 250 words. Methods and techniques papers provide status updates on methodology, techniques, and tips of topical but broad interest, while data articles describe a large phenotypic data set submitted to the journal repository for community analysis. All data sets should adhere to the best metadata and curation practices at the time of submission, which we expect to evolve over time. Methodological advancements in sensors, devices, vehicles, or technologies for data collection, data management, algorithms or data analysis should be combined with impact in at least one application domain of agronomy, genetic discovery, physiology, pest management, or plant breeding.

Protocol papers describe/document the approach/steps needed to routinely apply an existing approach to make it repeatable among large numbers of independent laboratories. They are expected to be used primarily by large collaborative projects, led by one or more laboratories having deep expertise in the protocol and an agreed-upon standardized process to be deployed.

Letters to the editor are published subject to review and approval of the editor. When letters concern previous articles, the authors will be invited to reply; letter and reply are published together.

URBAN AGRICULTURE & REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS

History

Urban Agriculture & Regional Food Systems (UARFS), copublished by ASA and CSSA, is a continuously published electronic-only open-access journal. The journal launched in 2016 after being acquired from the Baltzer Scientific Group.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

UARFS addresses securing access to and availability of culturally appropriate, nutritious, and safe food and other important plant products for a growing and rapidly urbanizing world population in times of increasing resource scarcity, diet-related ill-health, and climate change. This requires a multidisciplinary approach, and hence, UA welcomes contributions from a wide variety of disciplines.

Editorial Board

The UARFS editorial board consists of the ASA and CSSA editors-in-chief, the editor, associate editors, and the the program manager, publications director, and chief executive officer as ex officio members. See Chapter 1 for a general description of the responsibilities of the editorial board.

Editor. The UARFS editor is appointed by the ASA and CSSA editors-in-chief on behalf of the ASA and CSSA presidents. After consultation with the ASA and CSSA editors-in-chief and on behalf of the ASA and CSSA presidents, the editor appoints associate editors. The editor may write editorials and solicit manuscripts on special topics.

Associate Editors. Under the direction of the editor, associate editors are responsible for evaluating in a timely manner the technical and intellectual content and suitability of manuscripts assigned to them. Associate editors are responsible for finding reviewers and corresponding and working with authors to obtain revisions as needed. Associate editors recommend to the editor whether a manuscript should be accepted or released.

Workflow

A contribution to UARFS must be prepared in a way that will allow it to receive a double-anonymous review.

The editor oversees the peer-review process via the manuscript submission system. Once a paper is submitted, the editor assigns the paper to an associate editor. Prior to the official review, the editor may decide that a paper is not ready for review and release it back to the author.

After determining that a manuscript is ready for review, the editor assigns the manuscript to an associate editor. If, at this stage, the associate editor feels that the manuscript is not ready for review, they are urged to discuss their concerns with the editor before assigning outside reviewers.

The associate editor seeks the services of qualified peer reviewers via the manuscript submission system. The associate editor is responsible for obtaining at least two recommendations for acceptance or release of the manuscript and for ensuring that the reviews are completed in a timely manner. Reviewers of UARFS manuscripts are requested to complete reviews in 21 days.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

Associate editors can decide to return a paper to an author for revision but should never indicate to the corresponding author anything that would guarantee acceptance if certain changes are made.

Corresponding authors are given 30 days to complete minor revisions and 60 days to complete major revisions, after which time the paper is subject to release.

Associate editors do not have the authority to accept or release a paper during the review process. After reaching a final decision about the acceptability of a paper, the associate editor makes a recommendation to the editor regarding acceptance or release of the manuscript. When recommending that manuscripts be released, the associate editor should give sufficient reason to the editor so that the author can be fully informed.

The editor reviews the reviewers' comments and the associate editor's recommendation and may accept, modify, or disagree with that recommendation. The editor may:

- Accept the paper with no additional changes. When the editor selects this recommendation, the headquarters office and author are notified of the accepted paper and the production process begins.
- Agree that the paper is worthy of publication but disagree that the paper is ready for acceptance and recommend a revision. The associate editor then works with the author to clear up any points (often involving scientific and technical details). If the revised paper is accepted, staff and author are notified and production begins.
- Reject the paper, informing the corresponding author of that action and detailing the reason(s) for the release. Depending on the circumstances, the editor may encourage the author to clear up any technical problems and resubmit the manuscript for further consideration. Resubmissions should be noted as such by the corresponding author at the time of resubmission.

The editor may make an immediate decision at any time during the process if needed.

After a paper is accepted, the journal staff and publisher communicate with the corresponding author throughout the production process. The program manager supervises copyediting of papers approved for publication, typesetting, transmittal of proofs to authors, and publication.

Paper Types

UARFS publishes original research and reviews on urban and peri-urban agricultural production for food and other human related services. It focuses on the full range of dimensions related to urban and regional agriculture (production, ecological, social, and cultural). UARFS also publishes special collections and letters to the editor.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

VADOSE ZONE JOURNAL

History

Vadose Zone Journal (VZJ) is published online monthly by SSSA. The first issue was published in August 2002 as an online-only journal. VZJ became open access in 2018.

VZJ is a publication outlet for interdisciplinary research and assessment of the critical zone, which comprises the Earth's critical living surface down to groundwater. It publishes reviews, original research, and special sections across a wide range of disciplines.

Editorial Board

The VZJ editorial board consists of the SSSA editor-in-chief, the editor, co-editors who are experts in various areas, associate editors covering numerous subject-matter areas and responsibilities, and the program manager, publications director, and chief executive officer as ex officio members. See Chapter 1 for a general description of the responsibilities of the editorial board.

Editor. The VZJ editor is appointed by the SSSA editor-in-chief on behalf of the SSSA president. After consultation with the SSSA editor-in-chief, the editor appoints co-editors and associate editors. The editor may write editorials and solicit manuscripts and special sections on special topics.

Co-editors. Co-editors delegate to associate editors the responsibility for obtaining reviews from qualified peer scientists. Co-editors of VZJ have the authority to accept or reject manuscripts.

Associate Editors. Under the direction of a co-editor, associate editors are responsible for evaluating in a timely manner the technical and intellectual content and suitability of manuscripts assigned to them. Co-editors normally delegate to associate editors the responsibility of finding reviewers and corresponding and working with authors to obtain revisions as needed. Associate editors recommend to their co-editor whether a manuscript should be accepted or rejected.

Workflow

A contribution to VZJ receives a single-anonymous review.

The editor oversees the peer-review process via the manuscript submission system. Once a paper is submitted to VZJ, the editor assigns the paper to a co-editor. Prior to the official review, the editor and co-editor may decide that a paper is not ready for review and release it back to the author.

After determining that a manuscript is ready for review, the co-editor assigns the manuscript to an associate editor. If, at this stage, the associate editor feels that the manuscript is not ready for review, they are urged

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

to discuss their concerns with the co-editor before assigning outside reviewers.

The associate editor invites qualified peer reviewers via the manuscript submission system. The associate editor can serve as one of the reviewers of the paper unless the subject matter is too far outside their area of expertise. The associate editor is responsible for obtaining at least two recommendations for acceptance or release of the manuscript and for ensuring that the reviews are completed in a timely manner. Reviewers of VZJ manuscripts are requested to complete reviews in 21 days.

Associate editors can decide to return a paper to an author for revision but should never indicate to the corresponding author anything that would guarantee acceptance if certain changes are made.

Corresponding authors are given 30 days to complete minor revisions and 60 days to complete major revisions, after which time the paper is subject to release.

Associate editors do not have the authority to accept or release a paper during the review process. After reaching a final decision about the acceptability of a paper, the associate editor makes a recommendation to the co-editor regarding acceptance or release of the manuscript. When recommending that manuscripts be released, the associate editor should give sufficient reason to the co-editor so the author can be fully informed.

The co-editor reviews the reviewers' comments and the associate editor's recommendation and may accept, modify, or disagree with that recommendation. The co-editor may:

- Accept the paper with no additional changes. When the co-editor makes this decision, the headquarters office and author are notified of the accepted paper and the production process begins.
- Agree that the paper is worthy of publication but disagree that the paper is ready for acceptance and recommend a revision. The co-editor then works with the author—usually through the associate editor—to clear up any points (often involving scientific and technical details). If the revised manuscript is accepted, the staff and author are notified and production begins.
- Reject the paper, informing the corresponding author of that action and detailing the reason(s) for the release. Depending on the circumstances, the co-editor may encourage the author to clear up any technical problems and resubmit the manuscript for further consideration. Resubmissions should be noted as such by the corresponding author at the time of resubmission.

The editor may make an immediate decision at any time during the process if needed.

After a paper is accepted, the journal staff and publisher communicate with the corresponding author throughout the production process. The

program manager supervises copyediting of papers, layout, transmittal of proofs to authors, and publication.

Paper Types

VZJ reports interdisciplinary research and assessment of the vadose zone. It publishes articles across a wide range of disciplines. VZJ reports fundamental and applied research from disciplinary and multidisciplinary investigations, including assessment and policy analyses, of the mostly unsaturated zone between the soil surface and the groundwater table.

Contributions to VZJ include reviews, updates, original research papers, technical notes, letters to the editor, book reviews, and rapid communications.

Reviews may be may be invited or submitted. Updates are related to the journal's focus topics and are short reviews of recent progress in a particular area. They are meant to serve as both resources for research and advanced teaching tools. Most update papers are solicited from subject matter experts in association with a specific focus topic. Updates should not exceed 5000 words, with references, but excluding supplemental material. Updates should include a title that attracts the attention of non-specialists and an abstract of not more than 150 words. Updates are subject to the regular review process.

Original research findings are interpreted to mean the outcome of scholarly inquiry, investigation, modeling, or experimentation having as an objective the revision of existing concepts, the development of new concepts, or the development of new or improved techniques in some aspect of the vadose zone.

Rapid communications are intended to highlight time-sensitive new research results that have far-reaching impacts across the vadose zone community. These manuscripts undergo the same rigorous peer review as other submissions, but the process is accelerated and the papers are shorter and more accessible.

Technical notes are scientifically sound, stand-alone articles that tend to focus on new experimental (laboratory or field), analytical, or modeling methods, and they tend to be shorter in length.

Special sections on particular topical areas are identified and developed by the editorial board, and contributions are solicited by guest editors.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

Chapter 4
ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Books

In addition to the scientific journals, ASA, CSSA, and SSSA publish books, including Agronomy Monographs, the SSSA Book Series, Advances in Agricultural Systems Modeling, and the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Special Publication Series, as well as books on special topics, textbooks, professional guides, K–12 educational materials, multimedia, glossaries, and other miscellaneous publications.

All recently published books are available in print, in epub format, and on the publisher's website. The publisher's webiste also contains a digital library of all our past book publications.

DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION OF NEW PUBLICATIONS

The Book and Multimedia Publishing Committee

Approval of new publications is handled by the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Book and Multimedia Publishing Committee (ACS320), which consists of a chair, the editors-in-chief of the three societies, and representatives of the societies. Ex officio members of the committee include the staff publications director and program manager. Committee members serve three-year terms and may be reappointed. The chair serves a three-year term and may be reappointed for a second three-year term but not a third without an intervening three-year period. The chair rotates among ASA, CSSA, and SSSA. One of the appointed members who has served at least two years on the committee is selected as chair after consultation with the retiring chair and the editors-in-chief. On behalf of the society presidents, the book committee chair appoints members from each of the societies to serve on the committee. On behalf of the president, the appropriate editor-in-chief appoints the chair. The editors-in-chief recommend a chair to the president.

Duties of the Book and Multimedia Publishing Committee

The committee's functions are as follows:

- To receive and review book proposals and approve or reject the proposed publication on the basis of:
  - importance of the subject to agronomic and environmental sciences,
  - quality of content,
  - scope and nature of content,
  - probable demand and need for the proposed publication, and
  - existence of, or plans for, publications on the same topic.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook.*

The committee may release a proposal and request it be resubmitted with improvements, such as inclusion of additional subject matter or chapter authors.

- To explore and prioritize topics for development and publication, with the goal of ensuring ASA, CSSA, and SSSA are leading publishers in the agronomy, crop, and soil sciences.
- To identify editors and authors who are experts in these fields and solicit manuscripts from them on these topics.
- To identify and prioritize potential derivative publications and new editions of existing titles.
- To recommend policy with respect to publishing activities for consideration by the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Boards of Directors.
- To promote ASA, CSSA, SSSA publications with regard to sales, manuscript submissions, and general visibility to society members and others.
- To prepare an annual report of committee activities for submission to the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Boards of Directors.
- When deemed appropriate, to review an ongoing project (i.e., outline of subject matter, selected authors, originality, and the status and quality of the manuscripts) to determine if it is consistent with the original intent of an approved proposal. The committee may recommend termination of a project on the basis of this review.

Duties of the Book Editor

The lead book editor (in the case of multiple-author projects) is responsible for the proposal. All projects, even those solicited by the committee, require a written proposal. An online proposal form is available and can also be requested from the program manager. The program manager will assist with preparation of the proposal.

The book editor(s) or book author(s) do not need to be members of the one of the societies, but there is a convenience charge for nonmembers. There is no charge for society members.

The book editor is responsible for preparation, peer review, and content editing of the publication. This includes determining the scope, organizing subject matter, and selecting qualified authors. There may be more than one editor on a book. The editor(s) may serve as author(s), and an author may prepare more than one chapter.

The editor's primary responsibility is ensuring the scientific review and technical editing of manuscripts. Quality peer review is the cornerstone of the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA book publishing program. See Chapter 2 for a general discussion of peer review.

The editor is responsible for ensuring the timely completion of the entire book. The editor informs authors of their responsibilities relating

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

to completion of manuscripts within a prescribed time and is responsible for maintaining the book development schedule.

The editor is also responsible for supporting marketing efforts and is asked to supply contacts for marketing and to engage in promotional opportunities, such as participating in promotional events and distributing marketing material at relevant meetings.

On occasion, the societies publish books by a single author. In this case, the program manager, with assistance from the book committee, takes on the role of editor to manage the peer review.

Duties of the Program Manager

The program manager conducts a financial analysis of proposals, and viable proposals are forwarded to the Book and Multimedia Publishing Committee for review.

The program manager supports the editor during the proposal, development, and peer review of a title and oversees production of the final publication.

Once manuscripts have been accepted, a headquarters editor or a freelance copy editor corresponds directly with authors about questions requiring their attention. Proofs of each chapter are sent to authors for proofreading.

Royalties

The lead editor (or author of a single-author book) of an accepted book project may be eligible for an honorarium and royalties, provided the final manuscript is submitted by the deadline agreed upon and specified in the contract. Contributing authors do not receive payment, but each contributor receives a complimentary epub (digital copy) of the published work.

SERIES

Agronomy Monographs

An Agronomy Monograph is a detailed, scholarly treatise written by experts on a single topic where a definitive reference is required by the community. Monographs are published on an irregular schedule, only after the Book and Multimedia Publishing Committee determines a need for monographic treatment of a topic.

Advances in Agricultural Systems Modeling

The Advances in Agricultural Systems Modeling series includes the tagline "Transdisciplinary Research, Synthesis, and Applications," and the focus of the series is on this view of the role of modeling in advancing the agricultural sciences. Books in this series look at particular topics and how modeling can be improved and implemented to solve practical problems in agriculture.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.

SSSA Book Series

A book in the SSSA Book Series is a detailed, scholarly treatise written by experts on a single topic where a definitive reference is required by the soil science community. Books in this series are published on an irregular schedule, only after the Book and Multimedia Publishing Committee determines a need for monographic treatment of a topic.

Methods of Soil Analysis

Methods of Soil Analysis is a well-known subseries of the SSSA Book Series. Methods books on a particular topic may be published in the SSSA Book Series. Also, individual methods articles addressing advances in methods techniques or introducing new methods are published on the Methods of Soil Analysis webpage, which is part of the *Soil Science Society of America Journal* website.

Special Publications Series

Each society has its own Special Publication series. These represent a state-of-the-science look at a special topic. They often result from symposia on timely topics but may also be developed from an idea for a specific topic that is not associated with a symposium. The societies may jointly publish any of the series. Symposium organizers are urged to consider proposing a special publication and should do so as early in the symposium planning process as possible.

Other Books and Book Series

The subject matter of other books published by the societies includes any topic within the publishing goals of the societies according to their missions and strategic plans. Appropriate book projects include audience-specific publications, such as textbooks, books for those in related disciplines, and professional guides. The style and format vary with each project.

Multimedia

The societies encourage proposals for books that include complementary multimedia materials. The societies will also consider publication of stand-alone multimedia publications.

© ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, 5585 Guilford Rd., Madison, WI 53711-5801, USA. *Editors' Handbook*.