Science Societies

New Editors-in-Chief address challenges, embrace opportunities

By Denice Rackley

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The Societies welcome two new editors-in-chief (EIC): Dr. Bingru Huang will begin her term for CSSA on 1 Jan. 2022, and Dr. Craig Rasmussen recently began serving as interim EIC for SSSA after the passing of former EIC David Myrold in July (see https://doi.org/10.1002/csan.20569). Rasmussen's official first term as EIC will begin on 1 Jan. 2022 as well.

Both individuals bring a wealth of experience to their new roles.

Bingru Huang



Huang moved from China to pursue her doctorate in Crop Science at Texas Tech University. After post-doc research at the University of Georgia, where she began working with turfgrass, she accepted an assistant professor position at Kansas State University where she specialized in turfgrass stress physiology research. After four years, she joined Rutgers University where she continues to pursue turfgrass research and enjoys her role as a distinguished professor. During her 25-plus year career, she has published more than 330 refereed journal articles. Huang has served as an associate editor on 10 different editorial boards (including *Crop Science*) and is the EIC for the new *Grass Research* journal.

Craig Rasmussen



Dr. Craig Rasmussen earned a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and his graduate degrees in Soils and Biogeochemistry at the University of California–Davis before beginning his 16-plus-year career at the University of Arizona. He teaches undergraduate and graduate classes while researching carbon cycling in different soil systems, studying soil formation processes and ecosystem response to climate change. He has published more than 90 articles in various journals and served two terms as an associated editor and two terms as a technical editor with the *Soil Science of America Journal* (SSSAJ) and has also served on the editorial boards for the *Vadose Zone Journal* and the *Journal of Geophysical Research: Earth Surface*.

Huang and Rasmussen have been members of their respective Societies since graduate school and feel the EIC position is a way to give back, supporting the Society and its members.

Together, ASA, CSSA, and SSSA publish 13 peer-reviewed scientific journals in support of the agronomic, crop, soil, and environmental science fields. The goal of both EICs is to propel their respective journals to the pinnacle of a long list of soil science journals and ensure their continued success.

"Our Society journals serve as the platform for scholarly communication of scientific discovery and innovative technology and methodology, playing a key role in expanding

the reach of the Societies," Huang says.

"The EIC position is an opportunity to operate at a higher level within the publication process in terms of defining and guiding the vision of the journal along a path to improve its status and recognition and serve the Society membership," Rasmussen notes.

CSA News magazine recently spoke with both EICs who expressed their excitement about working collaboratively with the editors, editorial board, staff, and Wiley to solve the challenges and embrace the opportunities within their publications while serving the Society membership in their new EIC roles.

CSA News: What challenges do the Society journals face?

Rasmussen: In the 20 years I have been associated with the SSSAJ, I witnessed the journal transition from the flagship and premier venue for publishing soil science research in the U.S. to becoming lost in the middle of the pack of other quality journals.

The publishing landscape has changed significantly with the addition of many competing journals, changing subscription models, and the demand for open access to information. SSSAJ needs to keep pace with change in the industry.

Our partnership with Wiley will help address many of the structural changes with the industry and assist us in maintaining modern formatting.

Huang: The competition for authors among the many publication options requires us to form strategies to attract authors. We need to specifically reach out to graduate students and junior faculty, informing them of opportunities within the Society.

Increasing the efficiency of the publication process is also needed. Reducing the time from submission to publication will generate more interest in the Societies' journals. Simplifying and streamlining each step of the publication process and increasing the impact metrics will create more appeal, especially among younger researchers.

Rasmussen: Finding qualified and timely reviewers is a consistent issue that delays publication. With the explosion of journals, this problem has grown.

We might need to find some way to incentivize the review process. I do believe collecting data on why reviewers decline would assist us in attracting more reviewers. Shortening the whole process will attract more authors and, in turn, raise the visibility of the journal.

CSA News: Increasing the visibility and impact of each journal is a shared goal. What approach would you take to accomplish this?

Rasmussen: I believe the addition of new cross-cutting sections that are open access and have wide appeal would raise the visibility and impact of SSSAJ. My thoughts are to include two new sections, a "soil science letter" section, and a "soil science syntheses" section.

The letters would be short-form research papers applicable across many different divisions in the style of *Nature Geoscience* or *Science Advances*. The other section would be a longer-form synthesis of major advances on specific topics or summaries touching a wide range of aspects or findings that would be of interest to a broad audience.

These new sections would provide a desirable entryway into the journal for new authors and could provide free or reduced-cost incentives for authors, further

contributing to the journals' appeal.

Huang: One approach to broaden the impact and visibility of the Society journals is to promote the publication of high-level papers focused on novel technologies and emerging scientific topics that would appeal to a wide readership.

It is important to attract newer members to publish their work in Society journals. This can be accomplished by providing workshops or seminars at the Annual Meeting that explain the publishing opportunities available within the Societies and the benefits of publishing in our journals.

Assisting junior scientists in defining their ideal target audience that could provide professional development opportunities would generate interest in publishing within the Society journals, leading to more visibility for the researcher, their work, and the journal.

CSA News: Open access to scientific information is on everyone's mind. What are your thoughts on it?

Huang: I believe continuing to expand our open access offerings will be beneficial. We must remember that not all crop scientists around the world have subscription access.

Open access promotes visibly, which in turn increases the number of citations and heightens the impact of our journal, members, and the Society as a whole.

Rasmussen: Accessibility of data is needed to meet funding requirements and is central to advancing the science; SSSAJ should embrace full data-reporting opportunities. I envision SSSAJ providing a venue for publication of soil datasets and enhanced presentation of supplemental materials with articles.

In addition, enhancing our open access offerings and attracting new authors will bring a new audience to the journal, increasing the visibility and impact. We also need to keep in mind that book-publishing opportunities exist with the Societies, opening up a wide and diverse audience beyond academia.

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