



Science
Societies

Our journals: The first place we choose to publish?

By Felix Fritschi

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CSSA President Felix Fritschi

Given the wide array of publishing options now available, how do we choose where we publish our research? This month, CSSA President Felix Fritschi explains how publishing in Society journals is a values-driven choice that ensures rigorous peer review, aligns with the societies' scientific mission, strengthens the research community, and sustains member services and future opportunities.

In July 2023, the boards of our three Societies and the Agronomic Science Foundation met in Madison, WI, to develop strategic plans for 2024–2028. Together with members of our professional staff, we developed Society-specific strategic objectives as well as cross-Society objectives. For CSSA, we developed the following six strategic objectives:

- Increase science policy programming for members and increase advocacy to expand our value to external stakeholders by being the first stop for evidence-based science.
- Enhance national and international recognition of our Societies and its members.
- Make our journals and meetings the first place people want to share their research to increase impact and visibility.

- Strengthen international and external communication at all levels to increase engagement, create a sense of community, leverage interactions with allied societies, and improve member recruitment and retention.
- Innovate to ensure long-term financial sustainability.
- Set our members up for advantages throughout their careers with ongoing professional development.

CSSA Strategic Objectives

CSSA will direct time, energy, and resources in the following areas to achieve its vision.



The 2024–2028 CSSA Strategic Objectives.

Now in the third year of our five-year strategic plan, the CSSA Board reviews a strategic objective at each of its six annual meetings, assessing activities, tracking progress, and generating new ideas.

At our July 2026 board meeting, we will assess progress toward our strategic objective of “making our journals and meetings the first place people want to share their research to increase impact and visibility.” Our meetings and our journals are some of the most visible activities of our Societies and are critical to our financial sustainability. Just as I hope you view ASA, CSSA, and SSSA as your professional home and build a

sense of belonging through attendance of the CANVAS meetings, I hope we can also foster a stronger sense of ownership of our journals and encourage you to embrace them as primary outlets for our research.

The importance of publishing

Today, I want to focus on the journal aspect of this CSSA strategic objective.

With the daily or near-daily flood of messages from publishers and journals, I am often reminded how dramatically the publishing landscape has changed over the past decade or more. The rise of open access publishing and the rapid proliferation of for-profit journals, including that of many predatory journals, have markedly reshaped the competitive environment for society journals. Given the wide array of publishing options now available, *how do we choose where we publish our research?*

Publishing research findings is essential for scientific progress. It expands the reach of our research and creates opportunities to make a meaningful impact on specific stakeholders and society at large. The outlet you choose for publishing influences whether you reach your intended audience, the breadth of that audience, and ultimately the impact of your work. As reflected in the deeply ingrained “publish or perish” culture of academia, publishing is also closely tied to professional advancement for many of us. Although not without limitations and criticism, the number of peer-reviewed publications, along with journal prestige and associated metrics, are often used to determine academic credit and to evaluate candidates for hiring, promotion, and awards. Therefore, in an increasingly complex publication landscape, selecting the right journal can be challenging, potentially creating a tension between maximizing real-world impact and advancing professional success.

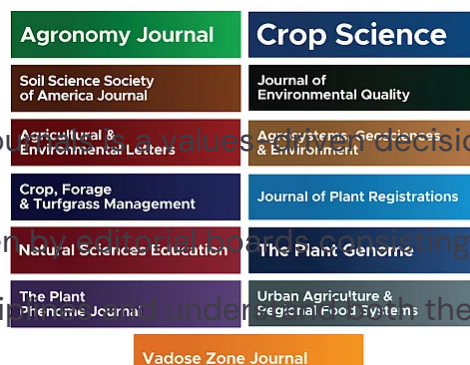
Despite ongoing debate about the value and appropriate use of journal metrics, they are often used as key criteria for selection of a journal for publication. For instance, an informal survey of established ASA, CSSA, and SSSA members at CANVAS 2025 found that respondents ranked journal metrics as the most important consideration, closely followed by journal readership, when deciding where to publish their work. The survey also included “whether the journal is an ASA, CSSA, and/or SSSA journal” as a criterion, but it ranked last among eight options provided. When asked why they publish in non-ASA, CSSA, SSSA journals, respondents again ranked journal metrics as the leading reason, followed by publication cost, time from submission to acceptance, co-author career stage (considering importance of journal metrics for junior co-authors), and acceptance rate.

While these survey results highlight that journal metrics and readership often dominate publication decisions, there is another important dimension to consider: The broader purpose and impact of where we publish. Publishing a paper is about deciding where your work lives, who reads it, and who ultimately benefits from it.

Why publish in society journals?

For many of us, choosing to publish in society journals is a values-based decision.

Journals published by our Societies are overseen by editorial boards consisting of active researchers who are experts in their disciplines. Publishing in these journals is a challenge of conducting research and of publishing it. Our editorial board members invest an extraordinary amount of time and care to make our journals the best they can be. They carefully select qualified reviewers that can provide thoughtful and constructive feedback. Articles submitted to our journals undergo rigorous review by qualified peer reviewers and editorial boards, a level of examination that is not always



guaranteed in for-profit journals. By ensuring fair and rigorous reviews, our editorial boards maintain the quality, integrity, and trustworthiness of our journals.

The articles published in our journals reflect the research priorities of our members, showcasing the latest findings and breakthroughs. When you publish in these journals, your work is more likely to be seen by researchers who will deliberate it, cite it, and build on it. It also increases your visibility within the Societies, creating valuable opportunities to connect and spark conversations at the CANVAS meeting, and foster collaborative opportunities.

Our journals are rooted in our mission, which, for CSSA is: "Discover and apply plant science solutions to improve the human condition and protect the planet." Unlike many commercial publishing models, our Society journals are driven by a commitment to advancing science and supporting scientists in our disciplines. This is reflected in our commitment to fair and transparent peer review, reasonable publication costs, and policies designed with authors rather than profit margins in mind.

Our journals also are a cornerstone of our Societies, central to our identity and long-term sustainability. They play a vital financial role, generating revenue for our Societies, thus contributing to our ability to offer member services, educational programs, and engage in science policy. By choosing to publish in our journals, rather than with for-profit publisher, you are investing in and strengthening our scientific community and future generations of researchers.

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Think about this community and how it helped shape your career: The conferences where you presented your work, the travel grants or fellowships that made attendance possible, the awards you received, and the mentors and collaborators you met along the way. Many of those opportunities are supported by ASA, CSSA, and SSSA. When you publish in our journals, you are helping sustain these opportunities for you and others—students, postdocs, and colleagues across our Societies. Publishing in a society journal is giving back. It's a way of contributing to an organization you rely on—not just as an author, but as a reviewer, a reader, and a member of a broader scientific community.

Ultimately, the strength of our journals depends on the community that supports them. By contributing your research, time, and expertise, through submissions, service, and engagement, you help ensure that they continue to thrive and serve as a valuable community resource. If you are not already involved, consider volunteering as a [peer reviewer](#) or serving on an editorial board. You can also sign up for the [ASA, CSSA, SSSA Peer Review Mentoring Program](#) as a mentee or a mentor.

To those of you that have or currently are serving on editorial boards and as peer reviewers, *Thank You!* Thank you for your commitment and dedication to our journals and our Societies, and for your contribution to expanding our impact both nationally and globally.

As the board prepares for its July meeting on this topic, I invite you to share your thoughts on how we can *make our journals the first place you want to share your research to increase impact and visibility.*

I look forward to receiving your comments, ideas, and suggestions at fritschif@missouri.edu ([send message](#)).

Volunteer with the Societies!

Interested in peer review or serving on an editorial board? ASA, CSSA, and SSSA members can log into the Member Hub to review open volunteer opportunities! Click [here](#) to see open positions.

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