



BOTANY 2021, BSA Board and Council Report Virtual! Via Zoom, July 2021

The past year has been challenging, to say the least.

If there are themes, they are:

- 1) We are committed to supporting our members and to publishing good and important science! We want to be our community's go-to journals for their research—and **we need our community to help us grow.**
- 2) Publishing at large is moving toward a more “**open**” model—both in Open Access articles and Open Science. This is in line with our mission to support botany and the communication of science, but the business model may have serious financial consequences for our Society's activities and for the journals themselves. We need our community to understand this and support us.
- 3) Because of the changes in publishing, our arrangement with Wiley is also likely to change significantly under a new agreement. We are currently in the fourth year of our original contract—and we have until the end of this calendar year to notify them if we plan to seek bids from other publishing partners.
- 4) We are, and must be, committed to **diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

1) Publishing Highlights over the past year:

- **Increased Journal Impact Factor for both journals:**
 - The Impact Factors were released by Clarivate on June 30, 2021. The **2020 IF for *AJB* is 3.844** (up from **3.038** last year, and our highest Impact Factor ever); **for *APPS* it is 1.936** (up from **1.591** last year).
 - We sincerely thank the editors, reviewers, and **authors** who support their Society journals. We need your continued contributions!
- **Progress from the Early-Career Advisory Board and the APPS Reviewing Board:**
 - The Early-Career Advisory Board (ECAB) is active, with terrific leadership from our Director-at-Large for Publications, Emily Sessa. Achievements over the past year include: 3 “Twitter Takeovers” (focused on Fruits, Plant biodiversity in tropical mountain ecosystems, *Vitis*); participation in

editorial board meetings and discussions; ECAB-er Brittany Sutherland's participation on a panel for the Council of Science Editors' meeting in 2020 on "Climate change in publishing" from an early-career researcher's perspective; and ECAB-er Eugenio Larios's help in organizing a special issue for *AJB*, "Approaches to the Study of Quantitative Fitness-Related Traits," with Susan Mazer, Steve Weller, and Ann Sakai. A new call for ECAB members will be sent out shortly. Current members of the ECAB are listed here: <https://cms.botany.org/home/publications/ecab.html>.

- **APPS Reviewing Editor Board:** In 2020, *APPS* expanded the role for its Reviewing Editor Board to provide new opportunities for post-doc and senior grad student researchers to gain a behind-the-scenes understanding of the editorial and publication processes. We received 37 applications and selected 15 [Reviewing Editors](#) to serve a two-year term, paired directly with Associate Editors as mentors. See <https://bsapubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/hub/journal/21680450/homepage/editorialboard#re>.
- *APPS* is also seeking **Recruiting Editors** to help solicit papers. See <https://botany.org/home/publications/call-for-applications-2021.html#APPS>
- **[AJB Reviews](#):** We launched a new Reviews series for *AJB* in late 2019 and published our first Review in October 2020. The Reviews team, led by Jannice Friedman, with support from Emily Sessa, Pam Diggle, and Amy McPherson, is actively recruiting contributions. To date, we have received 13 submissions (with several others in the works—we welcome proposals) and published 5 Reviews. We are in the process of recruiting a new Reviews editor to take over from Jannice. See <https://botany.org/home/publications/call-for-applications-2021.html>.
- ***Plant Science Bulletin*:** The *PSB*, now in its 67th volume, is an important outlet for member news and plant-related articles and book reviews. The *PSB* published its largest, and arguably most timely, issues to date this past year (2020). Under Editor-in-Chief Mackenzie Taylor's leadership, assisted by BSA staff Richard Hund and Johanne Stogran, the *PSB* covered how COVID-19 affected BSA members personally and professionally; how "Black Botanists Week" came about and what its goals were and are; and diversity and inclusion initiatives. The *PSB* home page was also updated recently to yield better search results. The latest issue can be found at <https://cms.botany.org/home/publications/plant-science-bulletin.html>. See the *PSB* report from Mackenzie Taylor for more information.
- **Outreach and Collaboration:** In support of the BSA's commitment to outreach and collaboration, the Editors-in-Chief of *AJB* and *APPS* hosted free author webinars and discussions in October 2020: <https://botany.org/home/resources/virtual-professional-development-resources.html>.

2) Increasing shifts to Open Access, for articles and research

We support the principles of Open Access: It's in our mission to support *botany*, and we acknowledge that communicating and sharing discoveries is essential to the research process. All authors want their research to be read, and the fewer restrictions placed on access to their papers mean that more people may benefit from the research. In many ways, the OA movement is in line with the shared mission of researchers, scholarly societies, and publishers.

One issue, however, is that income from our publications, primarily licenses and subscription revenues from *AJB*, have directly supported the important work of the BSA for most of the life of the Society. We are not unique—many societies fund their operations through their publishing programs. However, as we know, subscription revenues have been in decline for decades, and that has only accelerated as library budgets have been cut and there's been a shift to accommodate Open Access initiatives in some sectors (especially Europe). The business model for Open Access, at its heart, relies on decreasing the costs of publishing and increasing the *volume* of output.

Our publishing partner, Wiley, has negotiated a number of “transitional deals” that provide groups of institutions access to read Wiley's portfolio of academic journals and offer waived publication charges for researchers at those institutions publishing articles Open Access in Wiley's journals (<https://www.wiley.com/network/archive/wiley-s-transitional-agreements-a-summary>). These include Projekt Deal (which includes nearly 700 German academic institutions) and Jisc (covering 138 UK institutions, including the most important research institutions in the country).

AJB is currently a hybrid journal, meaning we are a subscription journal with a Gold Open Access option, funded through Article Publication Charges (APCs) or now through Wiley's Transitional Deals. All papers are freely accessible without a subscription after one year (going back to 1997, when the first issues of the journal were published online as well as in print). Moving forward, we are challenged with considering a move to fully Open Access.

APPS is a fully Gold Open Access journal, which launched in 2013. It is a home for methods, protocols, and other genomic resources papers. All authors cover APCs either through individual funders or Wiley's transitional deals.

Competition for Authors: A challenge for all scientific journals is how to attract high-quality papers and—in an Open Access environment—ones that also have the possibility of generating income, whether through funding APCs, participating in institutions from Transitional Deals, or adding value to subscriptions (if subscriptions still exist in the future). We compete with journals large and small, both commercial and society owned. **We have a mission to promote good papers in botany that serve our community—not chasing Impact Factor or ability to pay exclusively.** We consider this a strength, even though it presents obvious challenges. *This is why we need your help!* **Publish in your Society journals and encourage your students and colleagues to do the same! We cannot stress enough how important this is to the future of our journals and the health of our Society.**

Open Data: We support Open Data through our data availability policies and support of

Open Science badges. Beginning 1 February 2021, *AJB* requires authors to deposit data in publicly accessible repositories and to clearly state this in a “data availability” paragraph in their articles. Previously, this was strongly recommended. [*APPS* already had this as a requirement.]

Open Research Badges: In November 2020, both *AJB* and *APPS*, in partnership with the nonprofit Center for Open Science (COS), began offering authors the option of choosing “badges” to clearly signal they’ve made their data publicly available. See <https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2020/09/03/articles-are-the-fundamental-unit-of-datasharing/>.

3) A new 5-year proposal from Wiley

The world is a much different place than it was when we sought out a publishing partner in 2016-2017. We went from self-publishing in an era of the Publisher Big Deals and licensing (though we entered this in its “golden years”) to the era of Open Access and Open Data. The Big Publishers are and always have been major players, and there’s been tremendous consolidation in recent years.

It would be nearly impossible for us to self-publish in today’s environment. We get many benefits by partnering with a large publisher such as a global sales team to handle licensing and subscriptions, increased worldwide exposure and downloads of our content, savings on new technology, layout and production of articles, the online journal platform, and tools/resources for authors (see the publisher’s reports). With Wiley, we are in the company of other excellent life science/plant journals.

Wiley’s proposal for contract renewal focuses largely on transitioning from a hybrid model for *AJB* to one that is fully Open Access (assuming certain criteria are met) by 2027. It also counts on raising APCs (our rates are low compared to other similar journals) and significantly increasing the number of articles published by both *AJB* and *APPS*. We want to serve our mission and do not want to alienate our people: how can we move toward an entirely OA publication model while maintaining low publication fees for members and maintain a healthy revenue stream for the Society?

Wiley’s financial offer is a 22% reduction on the current contract deal we have with them. This is a significant reduction to BSA revenue and has repercussions for future budgeting and finances of the Society. What can the Society do to diversify its income sources? Is it willing to use some of its investment funds (currently near \$8 million) to support publications and its other goals and activities?

Is the Board/Society willing to subsidize member APCs? Is the Board/Society willing to financially support publications in new, possibly creative ways?

4) Increased focus on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion:

During the past year, social justice issues came to the forefront. The BSA’s strategic plan has “diversity, equity, and inclusion” as one of its pillars. The *PSB* recently included several articles highlighting the importance of DEI efforts and the incredible success of [Black Botanists Week](#). In our research publications, we are looking to community-created resources for helping our editors expand diversity, equity, and inclusion when extending invitations to reviewers, such as [Diversify EEB](#), [EEB early career reviewer list](#), and [Women](#)

[in Plant Biology](#). We are tapping into resources such as the Coalition for Diversity & Inclusion in Scholarly Communications (C4DISC): <https://c4disc.org/toolkits-for-equity/>, and taking advantage of Wiley's updated name change policy: <https://www.wiley.com/network/the-wiley-network/new-author-name-change-policy-supports-a-more-inclusive-publishing-environment>. We are also issuing more open calls for special issues to expand our author base, and open calls for people to join our editorial teams as Review and Recruiting editors for *AJB* and *APPS*.

It's been a challenging, and in many ways rewarding, year!

Appendix:

JCR, Impact Factor, and Journal Information

The Journal Citation Report* was released by Clarivate on June 30, 2021.

The 2019 Impact Factor for *AJB* is **3.844**, up from **3.038** last year.

The 2019 Impact Factor for *APPS* is **1.936**, up from **1.591** last year.

[*The 2020 IF = the number of citations received by the journal in 2020 to articles published in 2018 and 2019/number of citable items published in 2018-2019.]

The 5-year Impact Factor for *AJB* is 3.657, up from 3.245 in 2019.

The 5-year Impact Factor for *APPS* is 1.929, on par with 1.914 in 2019.

***AJB*:**

- In 2020, *AJB* handled 478 new submissions for peer review, and published 171 articles (this includes Highlights, and special issue introductions that were not sent out for review). Manuscript submissions in 2020 were up 6% over 2019. The total number of pages published in 2020 was 1838. Submissions were received from 43 countries, with the highest numbers from the United States (192), China (70), Brazil (26), United Kingdom (20), Mexico (18), India (16), Canada (15), Japan (15), and Spain (13).
- We have 59 Associate Editors from around the world: 37% of our Associate Editors are from countries other than the U.S., and 46% are women. See <https://bsapubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/hub/journal/15372197/homepage/editorial-board>.
- The average time to first decision in 2020 was 44.4 days (somewhat attributable to the pandemic); 2019 was 34.6 days; 2018 was 35.2 days; and 2017 was 34.8 days. So far in 2021, this number is 36.7 days.
- Our overall acceptance rate for articles in *AJB* was 37% in 2020 (38% in 2019, 41.5% in 2018, and 38% in 2017).
- Pam Diggle is in the second year of her second 5-year term as Editor-in-Chief.
- In late 2020/early 2021 we welcomed new Associate Editors Barnabas Daru (Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi), Kathleen Kay (University of California – Santa Cruz), Julieta Rosell (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México), Jürg Schönenberger (University of Vienna, Austria), Toby Spribille (University of Alberta, Canada), and

Sandy-Lynn Steenhuisen (University of the Free State, Republic of South Africa).

- Retirements from the Board include Gregory Anderson, Kay Hodgins, Cynthia Jones, Bruce McCune, and Jarmila Pittermann.

Special Issues

Special issues raise the visibility of a journal and demonstrate the breadth of our content, as well as (often) help our Impact Factor, by attracting high-quality and potentially well-cited papers. We thank all of the Special Issue/Section editors and contributing authors for their hard work in making their Society journal as strong as possible.

2020:

Joint Cross-Publication Special issue—*AJB*, *APPS*, *IJPS*

- [Plant-Environment Interactions: Integrating across levels and scales](#)—led by Gina Baucom, Sharon Kessler, Katy Heath (*AJB*); Sally Chambers (*APPS*); and Dan Chitwood and Selena Smith (*IJPS*). The February issues of *AJB* and *APPS* (partial issue) were devoted to this topic, and a Virtual Issue pulling together contributions from *AJB* and *APPS* was published on our hub page. Cross-publication promotion on social media included all three journals.

AJB 2021:

- **Life Without Water**—a special issue on plant life in water-limited habitats and the diversity of ongoing research in arid-adapted plant groups, led by Karolina Heyduk, Michael McKain, and Olwen Grace, was published in February 2021 in *AJB* (<https://bsapubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/15372197/2021/108/2>); a companion special collection of previously published *APPS* articles was posted as a [virtual issue](#) and promoted on social media. See <https://bsapubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/15372197/2021/108/2>
- [Exploring the Potential of Angiosperms353](#), a **Universal Toolkit for Flowering Plant Phylogenomics** a joint special issue with *APPS*; led by Bill Baker, Felix Forest, Lisa Pokorny, Steven Dodsworth, Jennifer Tate, and Sean Graham, this group of papers is being published in the July issues of both journals.

APPS:

- In 2020, *APPS* handled 78 new submissions (10 of which were Special Issue Articles) and published 77 articles (65 were non-Primer Notes). So far in 2021 volume 9 (through the July issue), *APPS* published 26 articles.
- Submissions were received from 21 countries, with the highest numbers from the United States (32), China (18), and Australia (4). NOTE: In 2020, the number of submissions from China decreased since Primer Notes were discontinued as an Article Type.
- *APPS* has 10 Senior Associate Editors, 9 Associate Editors, and 15 Reviewing Editors. Our current AE editorial board represents (in terms of current geographic location) the US, India, Korea, China, and Germany. *APPS* has just welcomed new Associate

Editor Guanjing Hu (Agricultural Genomics Institute at Shenzhen, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences). For the current editorial board, see <https://bsapubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/hub/journal/21680450/homepage/editorialboard>.

- Our overall acceptance rate for articles in APPS was 61% in 2020 (52% in 2019, and 50% in 2018).
- Theresa Culley is in year 3 of her third (3-year) term as Editor-in-Chief.

In 2021, the cover of APPS was redesigned (original, left; redesign, right)



In August 2021, both *AJB* and *APPS* will be published using a “New Journal Design” that simplifies and standardizes the PDF page layout for more efficient production.

It is now possible to publish embedded video in the html article through the Wiley Online Library. The first article with embedded video published in the May issue of *APPS* (<https://bsapubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/aps3.11421>).

APPS Special Issues:

One of the key ways that we are working to increase visibility of *APPS* is with special issues. Four special issues were published in 2020, and one in 2021.

2020:

- “Plant-Environment Interactions: Integrating Across Levels and Scales”—led by Sally Chambers; published as a partial issue in February 2020.
- “Conducting Botanical Research with Limited Resources: Low-Cost Methods in the Plant Sciences”—led by Gillian Dean, Alice Nakhumicha Muriithi, and Theresa Culley; published April 2020.
- “Machine Learning in Plant Biology”—led by Pam Soltis, Gil Nelson, Emily Meineke, and Alina Zare; published in two issues: June and July 2020.

- “Advances in Plant Phenomics: From Data and Algorithms to Biological Insights”—led by Sunil Kenchanmane Raju, James Schnable, and Addie Thompson; published in August 2020.

2021:

- *Exploring the Potential of Angiosperms 353, a Universal Toolkit for Flowering Plant Phylogenomics*—a joint special issue with *AJB*, led by Matt Johnson, Angela McDonnell, Susann Wicke, and Norm Wickett for *APPS*; publishing July 2021.

APPS is also actively developing special issues for publication in 2022 and beyond, including:

- “Methodologies in Gametophyte Biology,” led by guest editors Sally Chambers, Jerald Pinson, and Susann Wicke
- “Methods in Aquatic Botany,” led by guest editors Greg Pec and Julia Cherry
- “Meeting the Challenge of Exceptional Plant Conservation: Technologies and Approaches” (tentative title), led by guest editors Valerie Pence, Emily Coffey, and Megan Philpott
- “Low-Cost Methods in the Plant Sciences II” (working title), led by guest editors Gillian Dean and Greg Pec, for publication in 2023.

Outreach for Publications

With more than 50,000 total followers on our social media platforms—34.9K Facebook fans (up from 33.99K), 13.1K Twitter followers (up from 9.4K), and 2.4K Instagram followers (up from 1.3K)—we work hard to promote our authors’ research beyond publication and beyond the immediate BSA audience. We promote each article via Twitter, but we also encourage authors to use the tools at the article site to promote their research via social media or direct e-mail. This combination of broad-based marketing and personal contact helps to enhance BSA membership and *AJB* author engagement. See also Wiley’s marketing efforts in their report. As approved by the Board in July 2019, the BSA recruited two **Student Social Media Liaisons**—in 2020, Sonal Gupta (University of Michigan) joined Jared Meek (Columbia University) in efforts to enhance the BSA’s social media reach—and help promote authors and their work published in BSA journals, and to promote the work and initiatives of BSA members.

Your Research Publications Team

Our BSA Director-At-Large for Publications is Dr. Emily Sessa (University of Florida).

The current *AJB* editorial staff and freelance editors include Ms. Amy McPherson (Director of Publications and Managing Editor for *AJB*) and Mr. Richard Hund (Project Manager for BSA and Production Editor for *AJB*); and Dr. Marian Chau (Assistant Editor/Highlights Editor), Dr. Beth Hazen (Manuscript Editor), Mr. Richard Earles (Copy Editor), Dr. Larry Skog (Copy Editor), and Ms. Elaine Firestone (Copy Editor).

Ms. Beth Parada is the Managing Editor for *APPS*. She receives support with copyediting from Dr. Sarah Jose, and press releases from Dr. Jerald Pinson.

Dr. Mackenzie Taylor, Editor-in-Chief of the PSB, is assisted by Mr. Richard Hund and Ms. Johanne Stogran (Conference Director).

Respectfully submitted 2 July 2021

Amy McPherson

Director of Publications