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## Editorial

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## EDITORIAL

For several months in 1984 Robert E. Woodruff and I discussed the need for a new entomological journal. Naturally we were concerned about the literally hundreds of existing journals devoted to entomology in general and specific groups of insects in particular. (I had recently compiled, still unpublished, a directory of the entomological serial publications of the World.) We, therefore, searched and found an unoccupied niche for our new journal. We started *Insecta Mundi*, with the help of a local editorial board, in 1985. The first volume took two years to complete. (See p. 132 for publication dates of each issue.)

The original announcement describing the new publication placed emphasis on *prompt publication* (made possible by local peer review after the author had at least two specialists review the unpublished manuscript); *inexpensive publication costs* by asking authors to supply camera ready copy, allowing us to *eliminate page charges*; and *to provide World coverage*. Advancing computer technology and experience soon caused us to make some changes.

Our first problem was our method of peer review. The ambiguous statements in our flyer led authors to believe that we had NO prepublication review of articles, or, if we did, it was entirely inadequate. We now make sure that our reviewing system is strict enough to meet the requirements of most authors and still cause little delay in publication. Each article received is reviewed by two of the editorial board members. They suggest any changes that may be needed. They also examine the authors' presubmission review efforts. If there is every indication that prior reviews of the article were sufficient (e.g., University or Governmental review boards have approved the paper), we then accept the paper. If there is any indication of the need for specialists review, the paper is sent on for final review before typesetting.

The next difficulty we encountered was the submission of very long papers. Authors, delighted with the lack of page charges, sent mostly long papers they could not afford to publish elsewhere. We then found it necessary to limit the free pages to a maximum of 24 printed pages. Longer articles are accepted, but the additional pages must be paid at the current rate of \$32 per page.

Due to a change of publishers from Flora & Fauna Publications (not to be confused with Flora & Fauna Books, an entirely separate company) to E. J. Brill, Publishers, Leiden, The Netherlands, no issues were produced in 1987. Volume 2 was issued using professional type composition or by professional looking CRC produced by the authors. The new publisher's handling of the mailing list was much different than that most American subscribers were used to. Because of these changes, we lost many subscribers. Volume 2 was completed early in 1989. Volume 3 was taken over by the original publisher (under then new name, Sandhill Crane Press, Inc.) and completed in mid-1990. Volume 4 has been completed with this issue, and now, beginning with volume 5, *Insecta Mundi* will be published by the Center for Systematic Entomology, a not-for-profit, independent support group for the Florida State Collection of Arthropods.

Another difficulty arose which probably will be overcome by the new publisher. Since all authors are required to subscribe to *Insecta Mundi*, some subscribers come and go like clouds on a Spring day. When they have a paper to publish, they subscribe; if they do not anticipate publishing during a given volume year they drop their subscription. This selfish practice certainly does nothing to support the field of systematic entomology. It merely gets a paper published at the expense of the subscribers and publisher. Perhaps they imagine that there are many subscribers and that the journal is making a profit. This is not so. The typesetting has been contributed by the editor and publisher, and the publisher contributes toward the printing of each issue. In more normal times, library subscriptions help to support a journal such as this. New library subscriptions are hard to get because of their low budgets. Unless individual entomologists strongly urge their libraries to subscribe, they do not. In fact, in many cases, individuals subscribe and donate their copies to the library (thus gaining a tax deduction) and save the library's money for other purposes.

In days long gone, entomologists, always socially inclined, would group together in local bands for the purpose of displaying specimens and recounting field experiences. This greatly benefit-

ed the advancement of the science and ultimately resulted in the production of local journals which attracted the attention of correspondents of members of these local groups through the dispersal of reprints. By forming societies and charging membership fees, the publication of notes and papers became possible for those far beyond the regional headquarters. Many of these are our leading journals today.

After World War II the need for support of science in the U.S.A. led to the formation of the National Science Foundation. This support of education and research in the sciences resulted in an information crisis. NSF met this by offering page cost support for publications resulting from grants made for research. Journals enlarged and prospered from the "vanity" press thus created. As a result, societies have come to expect this kind of support for their journals. Indeed, dues no longer are enough to pay for the large volumes now produced. Printing costs go up and up which requires even more funds for publication. Page charges are the only solution. Or are they? If it were not for pages charges, many of our current journals would flounder and go under, or at least be cut back in size. Should authors have to pay for publication? In many fields, authors get paid. Paying authors certainly is a good way to assure the publication of worthwhile information. Publishers cannot afford to publish anything that will not sell. Unfortunately, page charges promote the publication of raw data, data better presented in less costly forms of duplication and distribution (by FAX for example) leaving synthesized data for more general distribution.

Faced with this problem in systematic entomology, we are still spending untold sums to produce hundreds of hard copies of a description of a new species when 5 or 10 copies would do as long as there is a way to assure their availability when needed. It won't get better until systematists leave the 18th century and recognize the new world of computer chips and advanced electronics. Fortunately Linnaeus wrote after the beginning of the printing press, or we would probably require all new descriptions to be handwritten as is still required of some documents by the Vatican. A new system for the publication of new descriptions must be devised. What form it takes will depend on the carefully consideration of the combined brains of todays crop of systematists. A new international union and a new set of rules is

needed to solve the needs of this new world. Then it will be possible for journal editors to select articles of wide interest and thereby attract subscribers because they will receive useful works instead of piles of paper never to be used unless the rare issue brings something in the specialist's narrow area of study. Gone are the days when a taxonomist must guard against the theft of a new species! Gone are the days when it takes months or even years for the news of new species to reach the specialists on the group. Gone are the days when the number of copies "published" must determine the "validity" of the new taxon. Once it is permitted, new taxa descriptions can be "dumped" into a common data bank and be instantly available to all specialists with a modem. Ah! The "old guard" says "but we don't all have computers." They don't all have complete libraries either, and with current budgets, they are much more likely to get a computer than a library. A computer and modem can be purchased for less than the cost of air fare to visit a "complete" library.

*Insecta Mundi* is an experiment, an attempt to correct some of the current difficulties in publishing systematic data at a low cost. We hoped to provide an outlet for the quick validation of new taxa. Bob Woodruff and I have not succeeded, nor have we failed; we have not reached our goal, but we are getting closer. We think we have made a start. Now it is up to the Center for Systematic Entomology (conceived and outlined by Bob Woodruff, and cofounded by Arnett, Fairchild, and Townes). It is good that these two project have merged and that their future will be ensured through this union. If the editors, board, and members of CSE accept the challenge outlined above, we will be pleased. It will take their combined imagination to develop a competitive journal, one that attracts the support of those who see the goal. If not, we have started "just another journal."

—Ross H. Arnett, Jr.