



Publications Committee American Society of Plant Biologists

Minutes of Committee Meeting held April 17, 2020, 12 noon – 2 pm EDT
GoToMeeting

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Neil Olszewski (chair)
Steve Theg (incoming chair)
Lisa Ainsworth
Pam Hines
Hong Ma
Craig Schenk
Judy Callis (president)
Maureen McCann (president-elect)
Mike Blatt (Editor-in-Chief [EiC], *Plant Physiology*)
Blake Meyers (EiC, *The Plant Cell*)
Ivan Baxter (EiC, *Plant Direct*)
Crispin Taylor (CEO)
Jennifer Regala (managing editor)
Nancy Winchester (director of publications)
Clara Woodall (CFO)

(GUESTS)

None

Minutes

1. Correction to agenda: The EiCs will sign off before an executive session is held to continue discussions on the *Plant Physiology* EiC search. Agenda approved unanimously.
2. The minutes of the Summer 2019 meeting, held August 4 in San Jose, CA, were approved unanimously.

3. EiC Updates

IVAN BAXTER (Editor-in-Chief [EiC], *Plant Direct*)

- a. Ivan gave a report on submissions and transfers. Rejection rate about 10%
- b. *Plant Direct* will receive its first impact factor in June [update: ~1.73]
- c. PD is starting discussions with J. Ex. Bot. about joining the partnership. [Update: accomplished]
- d. Ivan has renewed his three-year term as EiC.

MIKE BLATT (EiC, *Plant Physiology*)

- a. Mike gave a brief report. PP is back in the “star” category in China.

- b. Mike is working with Mary on the Assistant Features Editors (AFE) program: 23 News & Views for May's issue.
- c. Short on Founders Review past couple of years. Now have commitments from Dan Cosgrove, Steve Tyerman, and Don Ort.
- d. Andrew Hanson is now a senior editor on the board in the area of syn bio.

BLAKE MEYERS (EiC, *The Plant Cell*)

- e. Blake gave a brief report. Predicts submissions and articles published to increase in 2020.
- f. First focus issue, Plant Genomes, will publish in January 2021, but that date may change because of COVID-19.
- g. COVID-19 editorial (impacts of pandemic on journal operations) was co-signed by all EiCs and published.
- h. Looking for more Methods papers in Breakthroughs and Large-Scale Biology sections.
- i. Looking for improved access to our "editor expertise" terms to make it easier for authors to find editors.

Pam noted that Ivan said submissions are down ~20% in past month, but Mike and Blake are not seeing that. Why might that be?

Ivan – no real ideas... maybe *Plant Direct* is just not a priority at this point... maybe people are going for bigger stories. It would be interesting to know whether G3 or *PLoS One* are seeing similar things. PD is a new journal and may not be in the forefront of people's minds. Mike suggested maybe the 20% was within the realm of "noise," and Ivan agreed he had only small amounts of data to interpret.

4. Update on publishing partnership and next steps

Wiley knows we are in negotiation with a different prospective partner.

5. Update on portability of manuscripts among the three ASPB journals

Our goal is to improve the author experience and reduce reviewer workload. Metrics are needed to assess success include transfers within the ASPB family and submission counts. Mike added the number of reviewers willing to have their reviews transferred. We must assess the benefits as well as the impacts, on all the journals. See

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bNmsytkWwr2zIDpHn0sRHIUAOpj3tzJp7JZ-IX6pRul/edit>

Reviews need to be ported with the identity of the reviewer, so as to assess the quality and content of the review. (In the past, reviews have come without reviewer identity.)

Are we going to share only within the ASPB family? We'd previously agreed that we should get it working for our journals first, and then go from there. The "asking permission" statement needs to specify that we are talking within the ASPB family only.

Question about Reviewer Commons (about 15 journals, including PLoS titles, EMBO J., etc.). This is probably a phase two activity.

6. **Should the ASPB journals have a policy requiring author disclosure of competing interests? At what stage, submission or after acceptance, should the disclosure happen?**

Our current policy (<https://aspb.org/publications/policies-procedures/#toggle-id-1>) for conflicts of interest is directed at editors and reviewers and does not address authors or ask them to disclose when they have a competing interest in the work. Here is an example from *Nature*: <https://www.nature.com/nature-research/editorial-policies/competing-interests#application-to-authors>

Plant Direct's statement is here (probably part of what Wiley does for all its journals): <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/24754455/homepage/forauthors.html>

Conflict of Interest Statement

Each article must include a Conflict of Interest statement (to appear after Acknowledgements). You will be asked to provide a Conflict of Interest statement during the submission process. Please ensure you liaise with all co-authors to confirm agreement with the final statement. The journal requires that all authors disclose any potential sources of conflict of interest. Any interest or relationship, financial or otherwise that might be perceived as influencing an author's objectivity is considered a potential source of conflict of interest. These must be disclosed when directly relevant or directly related to the work that the authors describe in their manuscript. The existence of a conflict of interest does not preclude publication. If the authors have no conflict of interest to declare, they must also state this at submission and a statement to reflect this will be included in the manuscript.

Will we be bound by (or want to be consistent with) an OUP policy? (See, e.g., https://academic.oup.com/journals/pages/authors/preparing_your_manuscript/conflicts_of_interest.)

MOTION. Neil moved that Pubs examine the OUP author COI policy, and if it is acceptable to the EICs, recommend that BoD adopt it as the COI policy for PP and TPC. Steve seconds.

Discussion. Pam suggested it would be good if we could use the same wording for PD. Ivan expects that Wiley would be ok with this.

Unanimously approved.

7. **Should the ASPB journals have a policy on disclosure of chemical structures?**

An example from *Nature*: <https://www.nature.com/nature-research/editorial-policies/reporting-standards#search-menu>

Consensus: A strong, but flexible, policy is needed, e.g., that a chemical is important to conclusions in the paper but that in some instances the structure will be unknown.

Does our current materials-sharing policy cover this? Mike recommends a case-by-case basis and doesn't think we can demand what ACS demands. But readers do need to be able to reproduce the work. OUP and Wiley are already signatories to TOP (see link above). (But

Ivan notes that this has not come up for *Plant Direct* and that it doesn't show up in author instructions.) Mike said that when we adopt any guidelines, we have to inform the ed boards, so they know what to ask for. Neil asked the EICs to discuss this with their boards... keep an eye on things related to chemical structures in papers.

4. Any other business

None raised.

ACTION ITEMS

- Look at OUP's guidelines re author COIs; share with committee; forward to BoD with recommendation for approval.
- Review Commons will be incorporated into discussions regarding internal portability among journals
- Examine TOP and compare to what we have in place vis-à-vis sharing of materials and publication of chemical structures in papers.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The EICS signed off, and the committee went into an executive session on the PP EIC search, picking up from the Wednesday, April 15, meeting. Assignments for calls were made, and other aspects of the search process were revisited.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 pm.