



Editor's Note: A Call to Action

By Cecil Konijnendijk

When I was a young forestry student at Wageningen University in the Netherlands during the early 1990s and started exploring this emerging field called urban forestry, I came across the (then) *Journal of Arboriculture* (JoA). Our university library did not have all volumes of the journal, but what I found made me even more enthusiastic to pursue a career in urban forestry. I came to realise that JoA was the leading journal in the fields of arboriculture as well as urban forestry, although this was not yet reflected in the title. Reading articles in the journal edited by Robert Miller led to an internship in California and, a few years later, my first ever peer-reviewed article, published in JoA.

Many years have passed since then. JoA became the journal *Arboriculture & Urban Forestry* (AUF), and its contents were more readily available with the emergence of the internet and online databases. The fields of arboriculture, and especially urban forestry, developed rapidly and became truly global. With this came new journals as well, including *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* (UFUG), which I cofounded together with Thomas Randrup in 2002. UFUG initially had a strong European focus, and most papers focused on urban forestry rather than arboriculture. When I stepped down as Editor-in-Chief at the end of 2019, the journal had achieved a good impact factor, which ranked it in the top five of all forestry journals. Urban forestry (and arboriculture) had clearly come of age also scientifically. UFUG papers had started to get cited outside of the “green” literature, even in medical journals such as *The Lancet*. Increasingly, the links between urban trees and urban forests on the one hand, and the development of healthy, vibrant, competitive, and climate-resilient cities on the other, are being recognised.

As outgoing Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Jason Grabosky also highlighted in his excellent editorial that AUF has not yet capitalised on this exciting trend. Where science and journals have thrived, AUF has seen a decrease in the number of papers published. Dr. Grabosky gives some good explanations for this, including the difficult challenge of balancing science and the needs of a mostly practitioner audience. AUF has also suffered from not having a journal impact factor yet. Many universities and research institutes these days require researchers and graduate students to publish their work in journals that are highly ranked and have an impact factor. This principle now often supersedes the wish to reach the right target audience.

AUF, and the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) as its publisher, now find themselves in this complex publishing landscape. I am honoured and humbled to have been appointed AUF's new Editor-in-Chief and eager to take on the challenge. There are many good things to build on. First of all, the journal has undergone a major professionalisation during the past years due to the efforts of the ISA leadership, the visionary editorship of Dr. Grabosky, and the key contributions of our journal editor, Lindsey Mitchell. I also acknowledge the hard, voluntary work of our Associate Editors and reviewers, and of course all the authors who have opted for publishing in the journal. A journal like this is a community, and it can only thrive if the community is healthy and engaged.

In today's urban societies, faced with challenges ranging from climate change to public health issues, urban trees and urban forests have a crucial role to play. Just as we need highly qualified professionals who can take care of these resources, we need the research and evidence to support them. Good scientific journals are a key avenue for getting the latest

research across, as well as for addressing current research needs. There is no doubt that our field needs not only one, but several good journals, and I see AUF as starting to take an even more important role during the coming years. This will, however, require further development.

Working towards inclusion in key citation databases will be an important step, with the important aim of obtaining a journal impact factor and inclusion in the Web of Science. With this, as experience from other journals shows, comes more interest from potential authors. But it is not only about the citations and scores. Visibility and easy access are also key, and AUF needs to feature in all major research databases for our field. Key steps in this direction have already been taken, and we will continue along this path.

Further internationalisation of the journal will also be beneficial. AUF has traditionally had its stronghold in North America, where ISA also is strongest. Other parts of the world have seen the emergence of thriving communities of research and practice in arboriculture and urban forestry, and we need to make sure that AUF is an attractive publishing option for international researchers. ISA, as the only truly global professional organisation for arboriculture, can assist with this as well. We have to identify “hot spots” of research, look for truly novel work, while not forgetting the “nuts and bolts” of knowledge required by day-to-day arboriculture and urban forestry. While the shift towards more urban forestry content is admirable, AUF is still the strongest journal specifically dedicated to arboricultural research. In the past, the journal has been on the cutting edge of many topics, as also described by Dr. Grabosky, including new establishment and tree care practices and the management of pests and diseases. We need to build on this important niche and rich history, reaching out to associated fields such as horticulture and engineering.

A substantial part of the current research and publishing is done by graduate and postgraduate students, as well as early-career scientists. We need to establish better links to these groups, ensuring that they see AUF as a good option for publishing their work. An impact factor will be important here, but also easy access through major online databases, quick turn around times for articles, high-quality peer review and editing, and access to relevant audiences. Social media have also started playing a more important role in academic publishing, as many journals and researchers tweet and post about their recent papers.

We as an editorial team can of course not do this by ourselves, however excited we are about the opportunities and potentials. We'll need your help. We need ambassadors for the journal and authors who want to publish some of their best work with us. We have a long and strong legacy to build on, but the time for “green” research has really come. These are such exciting times for arboriculture and urban forestry, and I have no doubt that AUF will play a key role.

With immense gratitude to those who came before me, I am at your service.

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