



Editor's Note: AUF Goes Full Open Access

By Cecil C. Konijnendijk

The world of academic publishing and peer-reviewed scientific journals has seen major changes during recent years. First of all, the number of journals has grown rapidly, as has the amount of papers submitted and published. Those of us who research and publish have seen a steady growth in the number of review invitations from a colourful range of old and new journals. Moreover, previously dominant, large academic publishers have faced increasing competition from 'new kids on the block,' such as new publishers that operate with open access models. Obviously, scientific papers are now so much more readily available through online publishing of both accepted, in press, and 'pre-print' articles. It can be difficult to navigate this highly complex publishing landscape, especially for practitioners who are less versed in the academic universe but who are eager to stay up-to-speed on the latest research of relevance to their daily work.

The journal *Arboriculture & Urban Forestry* (AUF) has been around for a while now as a reliable source of research on aspects of arboriculture and urban forestry. However, having a long history and good reputation, as well as a strong readership through the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) membership, is no longer a good indicator of success and relevance. During the past years, the ISA's leadership, the editorial team, and the editorial board have worked hard to critically assess the current state of the journal and ways of improving its relevance and impact. We have, for example, published more special issues on curated topics and encouraged researchers from across the globe to publish with us. The emergence and success of other journals in our fields shows that arboriculture and urban forestry are rapidly expanding fields, so there is a clear need for a

journal like AUF. Urban trees are a hot research topic, not in the least because of global climate and public health challenges. Yet, unfortunately, we have not seen the increase in submitted papers that we would have liked, and not yet having a journal impact factor has influenced this.

We would like to increase the visibility of, and ease of access to, the high-quality work published in AUF. This will benefit both authors and readers and result in an increased interest in publishing with us. In response, ISA leadership has taken the momentous decision to transform AUF into a fully open access journal—the first of its kind in the fields of arboriculture and urban forestry. We will be unique in providing both full open access to all our articles while also continuing to let authors publish with us for free, without page fees or article processing charges. Only very few journals, often supported by scientific and other associations, have applied this model to date. It will give us the opportunity to serve arboriculture and urban forestry worldwide even better. One example of this is that colleagues in the Global South who cannot afford ISA memberships nor journal subscriptions will be able to access and use AUF research. From a science ethics and global equity perspective, this is a really important consideration in line with ISA's global mission.

The question can be, of course, what ISA members get out of this. First of all, they will benefit through the strengthening of arboricultural and urban forestry research and practice, as we all grow together. Moreover, members will still have unique benefits, such as free access to CEU quizzes based on journal articles. They will also see an increase in AUF papers, and as we receive more papers, we can increase the quality of published works through a more stringent review

process. The new model will also make us more visible and easily accessible to other disciplines and professions.

These are exciting times for AUF as we move into an entirely new phase of publishing. Thanks for your continuing support as we intensify our efforts to serve arboriculture and urban forestry worldwide.

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