



Celebrating 50 Years of *Arboriculture & Urban Forestry*/Journal of Arboriculture

By Cecil Konijnendijk

At its Annual International Conference 2024, held in Atlanta, Georgia, United States, the International Society of Arboriculture celebrated its centennial. During their keynote talk, Sharon Lilly and Joe Aiken gave an overview of ISA's lively history and important role in the development of the practice and science of both arboriculture and (later during its history) urban forestry. Lilly and Aiken also touched upon important milestones in this history, one of which was the launch of a scientific journal, the *Journal of Arboriculture* (JoA), in 1974. The first issue of JoA was subsequently published at the start of 1975 under the editorship of Dr. Daniel Neely. The journal started to be published bimonthly in the 1990s. Its name was changed to *Arboriculture & Urban Forestry* (AUF) during the mid-2000s to reflect the growing importance and recognition of urban forestry as an interdisciplinary science and profession.

This editorial appears in the final issue of Volume 50, so as ISA has been celebrating its centennial, its scientific journal has had its 50th anniversary. This is a milestone worth giving some attention to, as the journal has provided an important role over time in supporting arboriculture and urban forestry with cutting-edge, often highly applicable research. ISA's professional magazine *Arborist News* has been featuring examples of this research and how it has impacted practice during the past year. For many years, the journal was the primary outlet for arboricultural and urban forestry researchers. I remember, for example, how excited I was when I had my first article published in JoA in 1997, as an output from my doctoral study on urban forest policies and management in Europe.

The scientific publishing landscape has since changed dramatically, with large commercial publishers playing a dominant role, but also with increasing competition (and thus many options to publish for researchers) through the emergence of new publishers focusing on open access publishing and a financial model based on author publishing fees and quick turn-around times. In our research domain, I was one of the founding editors of the journal *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, which since its launch in 2002 has become a market leader and ranks high even among its forestry and environmental sciences peers in terms of impact. In a time of increasing competition and publishing alternatives, and with researchers aiming for high-impact journals under pressure from university and research centre expectations, AUF has had to re-find its footing. With the body of research in arboriculture and urban forestry continuing to grow and becoming increasingly international, there should not be a lack of papers. However, it has been key to give researchers good reasons to publish with us, as we don't yet have the impact factors that our peer journals have.

At the time of our 50th anniversary, AUF has made some important advances that should strengthen our role. First of all, ISA made the important decision to make the journal fully open access, without publishing or download fees, at the end of 2022. This step was supported by the move to a new publishing platform. This move builds on ISA's mission to support the professions of arboriculture and urban forestry by making some of the best available research available to all, irrespective of where you are in the world or whether you have the financial means to pay for

subscriptions or downloads. As a society journal being read by many thousands of practitioners across the globe, AUF also has the competitive advantage that it directly serves arboricultural and urban forestry practice, contributing to the uptake and societal relevance of the research it publishes. In a time where the science publishing model is under increasing debate, for example in terms of a fair distribution of costs and benefits, AUF should be attractive to researchers who see this as key part of their own mission.

This is the fourth year in my role as Editor-in-Chief of AUF, and I am standing on the shoulders of many giants in the field, starting with Dr. Neely but also including the likes of Dr. Robert Miller, Dr. Gary Watson, and Dr. Jason Grabosky, all not only excellent editors but also impactful researchers themselves. When preparing for writing this editorial I had to think of the words of Jason Grabosky, reflecting on his role as ‘Editor-in-Chief’ in his ‘farewell editorial’: “It is a strange title for a person whose main job is much like pulling on a rope for a large kite in the wind, explicitly ignorant of when and from where the wind patterns are scheduled to change, while asking others to provide guidance on the quality of the wind.” Indeed, as editors we are dealing with many uncertainties and changes. Therefore it is crucial to have a strong group of Associate Editors who are well positioned within arboricultural and urban forestry research and have at least a good idea of where the winds of research are blowing. We are fortunate to have these editors volunteering for the journal and helping it grow. Moreover, it is essential to have a strong editorial and administrative team at ISA headquarters. A big thanks to Lindsey Mitchell, Rebekah Holtzclaw, Jamie Vidich, and others for building a stronger journal. We are also indebted to ISA CEO and Executive Director Caitlyn Pollihan for her leadership and for making some of the recent bold moves, such as moving to an open-access model, possible. Society journals like ours can play an important role in reshaping the international science publishing landscape, bringing it once again closer to the needs and interests of researchers and those professionals using the research.

At the start of 2021, in another editorial, I issued a call for contributions and for support to AUF. The importance of AUF and the research it publishes has only grown further, with society and decision makers waking up to the essential role of trees and other vegetation in making cities and other built-up areas

resilient, healthy, and liveable. Recent years have seen unprecedented investments in urban forests worldwide, as illustrated by not only the 1.5 billion USD funding under the Inflation Reduction Act in the United States, but also by national urban forestry programs and funding in Asia and programs and policies by the European Union. At the start of our second 50 years, AUF finds itself in an excellent position to support our move towards greener and better cities, as a community.

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