

## Journal of Paleolimnology: looking back/looking ahead

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This issue (Volume 39, No. 1) of the *Journal of Paleolimnology* (*JOPL*) marks a transition. For the first time since 1988, John P. Smol is not listed as Editor or Co-Editor on *JOPL*'s front cover. For more than 20 years John was at the helm of *JOPL*, either going it solo, or sharing editing duties with Bill Last, from 1993 to 2006. As I take over the reins at *JOPL* (with some trepidation) I want to first thank John and Bill for their tireless efforts on behalf of the journal. All of us in the discipline owe them a great debt of gratitude. I confess that it is a daunting task to take on the editing responsibilities, especially following the incredible success the journal has enjoyed under the direction of John and Bill. This seems an appropriate moment to briefly review the past triumphs of the journal and say a few words about its future.

It is entertaining and informative to re-read John's opening editorial in the first issue of *JOPL* (Smol 1988), in which he made a case for launching an interdisciplinary journal that would be a venue for papers on lacustrine sediments. John argued that the establishment of a paleolimnology journal would bring together investigators from diverse areas, rather than fragment the science. Indeed, under its "aims and scope" the journal was explicit in giving the highest priority to interdisciplinary papers, thereby

encouraging scientists with different specialties to work together. If, in 1988, John harbored any doubts as to whether the journal would receive sufficient high-quality submissions, it is clear today, with the benefit of hindsight, those worries were for naught.

As John mentioned in the 20th anniversary issue of *JOPL* (Smol 2007), early submissions were strongly biased toward diatom-based paleolimnology, with a focus on North America. This of course reflected the tremendous contributions that paleolimnologists were making toward the documentation and understanding of cultural eutrophication, and especially lake acidification, at the time. Soon, however, the journal was receiving papers on work in many geographic regions that covered a wide range of topics. New field and laboratory methods were also being published. And *JOPL* was accepting manuscripts on cores collected in wetlands, rivers, peatlands, and estuaries. The common thread that bound all of the papers was the paleoenvironmental perspective.

Scanning the complete run of *JOPL* that is just to the right of my office desk, a few things are apparent. First, the journal now takes up about 90 cm of linear space on the shelf! That works out to a net accumulation rate of about 4.5 cm a<sup>-1</sup>. Second, over time the number of issues per year grew and the number of pages per issue increased. For comparison, Volumes 3 and 4 (1990) measure ~3.2 cm, whereas volumes 37 and 38 (2007) measure ~6.0 cm, a near doubling in accumulation rate in less than two decades. Third, a number of special issues were published, covering

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such diverse topics as, for example, “ $^{210}\text{Pb}$  dating of lake sediments” (1995, Volume 13 [2]), “Lake Baikal paleolimnology” (1998, Volume 20 [2]), “Arctic paleohydrology” (2000, Volume 24 [1]), and “Lake Tanganyika” (2005, Volume 34 [1]). These observations bear testimony to the success of the journal over the last twenty years and the growing interest in paleolimnology.

A few statistics serve to illustrate the growth in our field. In 1967, 89 people from 20 countries attended the 1st International Symposium on Paleolimnology in Hungary. In 2000, there were about 230 attendees at the 8th International Symposium on Paleolimnology in Kingston, Ontario (hosted, incidentally, by John Smol and colleagues). Over the last 40 years there have been 10 international symposia on paleolimnology. There have also been four international symposia on limnogeology since 1995. We still have our special sessions at many conferences (e.g., ASLO, ESA, AMQUA, etc.), but our discipline has grown sufficiently that we can now hold our own meetings every three years. The interest in paleolimnology is also evident in the curricula at many universities. In the past, paleolimnology was covered as a topic in classes on paleoecology or historical ecology. Today, many institutions offer full courses in paleolimnology. There are several recent texts at our disposal, e.g., Cohen (2003), Last and Smol (2001a, b), Smol et al. (2001a, b), and Smol (2002, 2008). And we now have a new generation of paleolimnologists who “grew up” with *JOPL*. *JOPL* has both fueled the interest in paleolimnological research, and in a positive feedback, has benefited from that increased interest. So our discipline is in good shape and will play a pivotal role in addressing applied and theoretical scientific questions in the future.

So where does *JOPL* go from here? My hope is to keep the journal on the steady, successful course it has followed over the last 20 years. During the past few months I have begun to take over editing responsibilities, and I have been learning “on the job.” John has been coaching me, and it is very reassuring to know that, although he is stepping down as editor, he remains available for consultation. I also appreciate the patience and assistance of the folks at Springer (Tamara Welschot, Judith Terpos, Tanya Muller, and Ayrene Dialogo), and I am grateful to the associate editors and board of advisors for their support. I want to assure them that I am always open to suggestions.

Lastly, I have a few observations and requests, based on my first few months on the job. First, *JOPL* continues to receive a high number of submissions from all over the world. Second, I am incredibly impressed with the time and energy that reviewers invest in improving manuscripts. I appreciate the constructive reviews, as do the authors. As many reviewers have seen, we now receive many more papers from authors for whom English is not the “mother tongue.” I am awed and impressed by the efforts of these authors. I encourage them, however, to solicit assistance from a native English speaker before submitting a manuscript. It simplifies the reviewer’s job and leads to a more favorable review. I thank the many reviewers who take the time to provide detailed editorial assistance in such cases. Third, when submitting a manuscript, please provide a list of potential reviewers and their e-mail addresses (I am not bound by these suggestions, but typically I send it to one of the reviewers on the list). This facilitates getting the paper out for review quickly and prevents “reviewer abuse,” i.e., constant use of the same reviewers. Fourth, if you are asked to review a paper and absolutely cannot do so, please be kind enough to suggest several alternate reviewers.

I appreciate your patience during this transition period and hope this message finds you in good spirits. I will take this opportunity to encourage you to go forth, take cores, and send your finest manuscripts to *JOPL*.

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