

EDITORIAL

When Mark Newman took on the role of editor-in-chief of the *Edinburgh Journal of Botany* at the beginning of 2014, he stated clearly that it would be for a fixed term of three years. Now that his tenure has come to an end, I find myself in the enviable position of taking on responsibility for a thriving journal that has made the transition to early online publication (FirstView) under his management, has introduced colour figure printing free of charge to authors, and now has an outstanding average lead time from manuscript submission to publication. We owe Mark a debt of gratitude for both his exceptionally deft handling of the editorial process and his development of ‘EJB’ into a fully fledged international e-journal.

Like Mark, I will edit the journal for three years. My own background is in bryological systematics and of course I would encourage submission of papers in bryological and other cryptogamic subject areas in addition to seed plant botany, which will naturally remain the mainstay of what we publish.

The journal has hosted a wide range of high-quality botanical research over the past three years, covering subjects as diverse as the phytogeography of Neotropical dry forests, the reproductive phenology of cycads and the cytology of edelweiss. Taxonomy has remained a core strength, with many new species described and much valuable revisionary work undertaken, often relevant to threatened ecosystems in tropical Asia and the New World. Robert Mill’s monumental revisionary work on *Podocarpus* and *Retrophyllum* deserves a special mention – published as a series of four large papers, it will doubtless form the primary taxonomic resource for these key southern hemisphere forest trees for many decades to come.

It has become a cliché to point out that taxonomy and systematics, the tools we use to recognise and quantify natural capital, have never been more important in the face of unprecedented threats to ecosystems from habitat destruction and the increasing uncertainties of climate change and international politics. Nonetheless, it remains difficult to publish taxonomic and floristic work (and large monographs in particular) in international journals with a fully developed online presence and widespread availability. This is partially due to the long shelf life of this type of research, which may remain highly relevant and continually cited for decades (as well as widely used for practical purposes such as field identification) without necessarily having such an immediate impact as other biological work, which is nonetheless often obsolete within two or three years. Nearly all the popular metrics for quantifying research impact are strongly weighted against longevity and wider utility, to the detriment of funding for these disciplines and ultimately the production of the resources we so desperately need to monitor and conserve biodiversity.

The *Edinburgh Journal of Botany* will remain a leading forum for the publication of high-quality systematic and floristic research of long-term high impact, while

also encouraging submission of papers in all other areas of botanical research. Because of its association with the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE), the journal is able to draw on a unique pool of in-house expertise and international networking to facilitate expert peer review, publication and showcasing of research within our core specialities. Increasingly, the true impact of research depends on electronic dissemination, not only through e-publication but also through secondary websites, social media and links to wider research agendas. The embedding of EJB within RBGE's uniquely connected and influential online presence, together with the formidable resources of Cambridge University Press, ensure that the best research we publish has many potential avenues to visibility.

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