Editorial

Publishing in The American Biology Teacher

One of the many benefits of being a member of the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) is receiving The American Biology Teacher. That journal—which you’re reading now—is the most visible aspect of NABT. ABT is well-known and widely read; it is cited in all major science abstracting services. Authors who publish papers in ABT are often surprised when they receive letters and reprint requests from readers throughout the world.

Contrary to popular belief, it is not difficult to publish a paper in ABT. Although the journal has several popular categories for contributions (articles, how-to-do-its, etc.), we’re anxious to publish anything that will help our members be better teachers. We look for a variety of topics and annually focus on one predominant area of interest—thus we bring you this special issue on botany.

Virtually all biology teachers could publish something in ABT. It could be a manuscript about a topic about which you’ve just finished a short-course, or it could be a description of your favorite lab activity. Biology teachers have many good ideas for enhancing instruction, and we’re anxious to disseminate those ideas to our readers.

The most important step in publishing a paper in ABT is the first one: writing and mailing your paper (see our “Guidelines for Authors” on pp. 460–461 for information about formatting your paper, etc. We can’t write your paper for you, but we will do all we can to ensure that it is published. Here’s what happens when you submit a paper for publication in ABT:

Within a couple of weeks we’ll acknowledge receiving your paper and send it out for review. Specifically, we’ll send your paper to at least two reviewers and ask them to comment on the suitability of your paper for ABT. We encourage the reviewers to return their reviews within three weeks or so, but sometimes they take longer. Like any peer-reviewed journal, we’re very dependent on our reviewers for their expertise (visit our web site, www.nabt.org, to sign up as a reviewer for ABT). All submissions are sent to reviewers for their comments.

When we receive the reviewers’ comments, we make one of three decisions about your paper:

- **Accept the paper “as is.”** This is unusual; we’ve only had three papers like this in the past 12+ years. Chances are that the reviewers will have some comments for you to consider for improving your paper.
- **Do not publish the paper in its original form, but publish it after the author(s) revise the paper according to reviewers’ comments.** More than half of the papers submitted for publication fall into this category. Your paper will probably be published, but you’ll have to revise it according to the reviewers’ comments.
- **Reject the paper.** The reviewers don’t think that the paper is overly original and/or would make a significant contribution to our profession.

When a paper is accepted for publication, it is forwarded to Chris Chantry (ABT’s Managing Editor), who then schedules the paper for publication. On average, it takes anywhere from 8 to 15 months for a paper to appear in print after it has been returned to authors for revision. Much of this time often results from delays by authors in returning their revised manuscripts. However, part of the remaining time is due to the success of ABT. Indeed, the journal’s enhanced reputation over the past few
years has resulted in a 300% increase in the number of papers submitted for publication. Most papers that we receive are from university-level faculty. However, papers from K–12 teachers have the greatest chance of publication; we publish a larger percentage of those papers than we do papers from university faculty. Unfortunately, we don’t receive as many papers from K–12 teachers.

We also encourage you to review books, software, audiovisual materials, and Web sites for our regular Book Reviews and Classroom Technology Departments. The reviewer form can be submitted for those departments, as well.

ABT exists to serve biology teachers. If you have ideas that would benefit other biology teachers, we hope you’ll submit a manuscript describing those ideas or share your opinion of biology-related publications. When your work is published in ABT, you’ll have made a significant contribution to our profession.

We look forward to seeing your paper or review.

Randy Moore  
Editor  
Chris Chantry  
Managing Editor

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