Some Initial Observations

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It has now been several months since I took over as editor-in-chief. While I can honestly say that the learning curve has been steeper than I expected, I believe the journal is continuing to move forward, and I am enjoying the position. I have also received a number of compliments on the new format of the journal, which are a direct result of efforts by the editorial staff and our new publishing agreement with Oxford University Press. As I have been learning about our processes and building a working relationship with Oxford, I thought I would share my interpretation of a few items that tend to generate questions.

Manuscript Length: I have started reaching out to potential authors seeking Applied Research and Practice of Forestry articles on current topics of potential interest to the readership (e.g., Good Neighbor Policy). However, the issue of word limits has come up repeatedly in these conversations, and from those conversations, I understand that some authors are not thinking of the JOF as a venue for their work because of the word limit listed in the guide to authors.

First and foremost, authors should recognize that the word limits published in the guide to authors are a “guide,” not a hard and fast rule. Some authors have struggled with getting their papers accepted in the past because the manuscript was over the word limit and were told that they had to shorten it or submit elsewhere—myself included. While this has not been journal policy for some time, this perception still exists among perspective authors. The associate editors and I fully recognize that some flexibility is needed to adequately address any given topic. The word limit specified in the guide to authors for research articles is 4,500 words. Shorter papers are certainly acceptable from the standpoint of length. Similarly, I am willing to consider longer manuscripts up to about 6,000 words. I am hopeful that increasing author awareness of this flexibility will serve to increase the number of submissions, particularly in those areas with complex research questions. This flexibility applies to other types of manuscripts as well, even though the suggested word limits are lower and the degree of flexibility is obviously less.

Special Issues: Another topic that has been a constant point of confusion over the past few months involves the cost associated with publishing special issues. The Journal of Forestry typically publishes one or two special issues per year. If the number of articles or pages in a proposed special issue exceeds the number pages available in a given issue, the group submitting the papers will incur a charge for the extra pages needed. This point is generally well understood by prospective contributors. In addition, there are opportunities for special sections and even special issues that fit within the publishing schedule and JOF page budget at no additional costs. These decisions are subject to approval by the editor-in-chief.

Call for New Associate Editors: Associate editors (AEs) play a critical role in the production of any high-quality journal. The role of the AE is to solicit reviews for manuscripts assigned within their area of expertise (e.g., economics, policy, silviculture) and to provide additional input relative to the overall quality of the manuscript and the independent reviews for the editor-in-chief to use in rendering a final decision. AEs typically serve one- or two-three-year terms on the editorial board. At this point in time, we have several AEs who have served five or more years and need to rotate off. Therefore, I am seeking individuals who would be interested in serving in this capacity for at least one three-year term. If you are interested, please send me (blatnerk@safnet.org) a copy of your CV and a statement of interest.

In Closing: I sincerely hope this information provides some much-needed clarification for those considering the Journal of Forestry as a publication outlet for their work. The variety of manuscripts received and the level of interest in the journal has been very exciting and bodes well for the future. I am also hopeful the added flexibility will result in a more informative and useful member publication.

Of course, the journal remains open to a wide variety of forestry-related manuscripts and alternative perspectives. The journal continues to seek new manuscripts in order to serve the needs and interests of the membership at large. It is also important to remember that all accepted manuscripts receive a DOI number and are published online prior to being published in print format. The journal is always striving to reduce review times and publish content as rapidly as possible to better serve the needs of the authors and the readership.