Refining Our Mission

Matthew Walls

The passing of one year to the next is an opportunity for reflection. What did we do well in the prior year? What can we do better in the coming year?

For the Journal of Forestry, 2005 was a time of great change. We adopted a dramatic new design, restaffed our editorial boards with energetic and motivated individuals from a wide range of forestry backgrounds, and welcomed three forestry-credentialed editors to oversee the scientific credibility of the JoF. In addition, a massive managerial effort behind the scenes allowed us to cut review times by 65% over 2004. We established timely communication and review as best management practices, and we acquired new submission management software that will allow staff to better supervise the global flow of manuscripts through peer-review. Faster reviews and faster time to publication will position the JoF as the most attractive outlet for the highest quality forestry research. With time, I am confident that the JoF will be viewed as the definitive source for forestry information.

For 2006, we will continue to refine our presentation. You have no doubt noticed a few of the design changes in the first few pages of this issue. For example, the table of contents now lists articles by discipline. As I mentioned in my commentary last April (available online at www.safnet.org/periodicals/jof00305000107.PDF), we have changed the format of the JoF away from theme issues, which we hope will provide something for everyone within each issue. These category headings will help you seek out information specific to your interests. In addition, we’ve added two new sections to the Journal: “Research in Review” highlights articles in Forest Science and the Regional Journals of Applied Forestry, and “Exploring the Roots” showcases introductions revisiting seminal articles from the nearly 100 years of JoF history in SAF’s newly created online archive, The Roots of Forestry.

But our achievements are more than just cosmetic. With the editors of all SAF periodicals on hand at SAF’s annual convention in Ft. Worth, we put our heads together to discuss the purpose of the JoF. Forest Science focuses on fundamental forestry research and theory and the Regional Journals of Applied Forestry print region-specific research and applications, what niche does the JoF fill? At the end of our discussion we were able to better refine the purpose of the JoF: to disseminate forestry information with implications beyond the initial area of research. In other words, JoF will serve as the bridge between research and practice.

In the coming year you can look forward to a JoF that includes discussions of educational outreach and communication, economic considerations, silvicultural best practices, social dimensions of forestry, the rapid growth of urban forestry, emerging technologies, fire risk and response, entomological and pathological vectors, national policy, and more. In short, whatever might affect our valuable forest resource and the people who depend on it. The very mission of the SAF.

Matthew Walls (wallsm@safnet.org) is director of publications for the Society of American Foresters and managing editor for the Journal of Forestry.