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Journal Interviews : 2009 : Forest Pathology

JOURNAL INTERVIEWS - 2009

November 2009



Forest Pathology

Featured Journal Interview

According to a recent analysis of **Essential Science IndicatorsSM** data from **Thomson Reuters**, the journal *Forest Pathology* is having a growing **impact** in the field of **Environment & Ecology**. The journal's current record in this field includes 338 papers cited a total of 1,330 times between January 1, 1999 and June 30, 2009.

In this interview, ScienceWatch.com talks with **Dr. Stephen Woodward**, *Forest Pathology's* Editor-in-Chief, about the journal's history and citation record.

SW: When and under what circumstances was *Forest Pathology* founded?

Forest Pathology was born in 1971, as the *European Journal of Forest Pathology*, a year after a small group of prominent European forest pathologists developed the idea for the journal during a meeting in Germany. The first editor-in-chief was Professor Peter Schütt of the University of Munich. The editorial board included E. Donaubaue (Vienna), J. Gremmen (Wageningen), Th. Keller (Zürich), L. Lanier (Nancy), and J.S. Murray (Aberdeen). It was perceived that an international journal was required to provide a suitable outlet for tree pathology research, as an alternative to the work being diluted amongst other forestry, botany, and microbiology journals.

The name was simplified to *Forest Pathology* in 2000, under the second editor-in-chief, Prof. Ottmar Holdenrieder (Zürich), to give the journal a more international scope, reflecting the number of papers received from outside Europe.

SW: Did you expect *Forest Pathology* to become highly cited, or is this surprising to you?

It is surprising that citations are increasing, although it is also very gratifying. The journal could be regarded as "niche," but the papers we publish are clearly being seen by a wide range of plant pathologists, microbiologists, and environmentalists now.

SW: How would you account for the increased citation rate of *Forest Pathology*?

Several factors probably contribute to the increase in citations. A major factor is an increasing perception of the importance of environmental issues, something on which the journal is highly focused. For example, we are witnessing an unprecedented rise in the

"We occupy a niche position in the plant science field, and we also overlap into animal science... ecology, and environmental science."

numbers of alien invasive pests and pathogens becoming established in non-native regions of the world, generating a lot of information and a great deal of interest from a wide range of scientists and policymakers, as well as the general public. These alien species present major threats to forest ecosystems and warrant a high level of attention from the political authorities.

Other factors include the number of papers using state-of-the-art methods in molecular biology and chemistry, which are very attractive to citation by a much wider range of users than forest pathologists *per se*, and the availability of the journal in online packages bought by academic libraries throughout the world.

Of course, we also have an excellent group on the editorial board for the journal, with a wide range of high-level expertise within forest pathology; these people are all crucial to our success, as are the reviewers we rely upon for criticisms of submitted manuscripts.

SW: Was there a change in policy or editorial direction that might account for this?

Our policy is to publish papers of the highest possible quality, whilst enabling information to be available from scientists in countries that have hitherto had little exposure in the "western" scientific press. We employ a rigorous system for scrutinizing submitted manuscripts, but offer all the help we can (within our personal time constraints) in sorting out language problems for scientists who do not speak English as their first language.

Moreover, we try to complete the editorial procedures as rapidly as possible: our turnover rate for manuscripts has improved considerably in the last year, and we aim to make further improvements to reduce the time from submission to first decision. These matters represent a gradual evolution of the editorial process, rather than strict editorial policy. They do, however, appear to be successful.

SW: Have there been specific developments in the fields served by *Forest Pathology* that may have contributed?

"...alien species present major threats to forest ecosystems and warrant a high level of attention from the political authorities."

As described above, the increasing use of state-of-the-art techniques in forest pathology and the apparent rising importance of alien invasive pathogens are such developments.

SW: What, in your view, is this journal's main significance or contribution in the field of Plant & Animal Science?

We occupy a niche position in the plant science field, and we also overlap into animal science (for example, the importance of bark beetles as vectors of pathogenic microorganisms), ecology, and environmental science. The main significance is our focus on biotic and abiotic factors impacting on the health of trees in all their various locations, at landscape, forest, urban, horticultural production, and even garden scales.

SW: How do you see your field(s) evolving in the next few years?

The rise in importance of alien invasive pathogens will, unfortunately, continue. We may be witnessing only the tip of the iceberg for these problems, and the journal will be a front-runner in presenting data on these organisms. At the same time, we will continue to report important developments in disease biology and management for all tree pathogen problems.

SW: What role do you see for your journal?

We will be amongst the first, if not the first, to report critical information on tree pathogens, their ecologies, impacts, and management. ■

Forest Pathology

Dr. Stephen Woodward, Editor-in-Chief

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., publishers

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