

## A new life for *BioControl*

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*BioControl*, over the years, has established a leading role in publishing the finest and most exciting work in all aspects of biological control of invertebrate, vertebrate and weed pests, and plant diseases. Coverage includes the biology and ecology of organisms for biological control, and aspects of their use for integrated pest management (IPM), such as plant resistance, pheromones and intercropping. Besides original research articles, *BioControl* also publishes Forum articles, review papers and Letters to the Editor.

The journal started in autumn 1996 under the leadership of Heikki M.T. Hokkanen (University of Helsinki, Finland), and rapidly acquired an international audience. This is evidenced by a steady increase of about 30% in manuscript submissions each year over the last six years, and an ISI Journal Citation Index comparable to other international journals in the field of biological control. After 10 years of excellent leadership, Heikki M.T. Hokkanen decided to tackle other editorial activities and I became the editor in chief of the journal in September 2006.

In scientific publishing there is, of course, intense competition between journals and there has always been a strong pressure to improve the quality and

audience of *BioControl*, without forgetting that it should remain an exceptional media for scientists from all over the world to publish their original results on biological control. To achieve this, several changes have been implemented over the last year, giving our journal new breath. I will discuss these different changes in this editorial.

First of all, the board of Associated Editors has been renewed. It now contains 10 renowned scientists covering all main topics treated in *BioControl* (parasitoids, predators, nematodes, plant and insect pathology, weeds and IPM). Their main role is to handle manuscripts submitted, inviting referees, and to take the editorial decision needed for each of them. All Associated Editors are now working hard and prioritising the aim to reduce the time from manuscript submission to final decision, and consequently the average ( $\pm$ SE) decision time has drastically decreased over the last years (2006:  $136.14 \pm 8.84$  days ( $n = 160$ ); 2007:  $72.05 \pm 6.00$  days ( $n = 192$ )) and will probably decrease further in the future. In this regard, authors are also strongly invited to submit materials that strictly respect the instructions for authors as per our web site, saving additional editorial delays. Finally, accepted papers are now published on-line with a DOI reference about one month following acceptance. All of this is based on a rigorous reviewing process and meticulous work by all Associated Editors. As a result, only a limited number of the manuscripts submitted to our journal can now be reviewed. Most manuscripts not accepted are actually

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excellent studies, but do not meet the *BioControl* guidelines and criteria and, so given our limited page space, are rejected (a limited total number of 760 pages only will be published in 2009). Rejection with or without review from *BioControl* should be taken in this light.

Another important recent change is that all submitted manuscripts are now handled following a blind reviewing process, in which the identity of the authors is kept from reviewers. Similarly, reviewers' names are kept confidential. For this, authors should submit anonymous manuscripts avoiding explicit disclosure of their identity. It is hoped that such a blind reviewing policy will produce a fair assessment for all manuscripts, with the intention that the decision is based only on the overall quality and novelty of the science.

The presentation of the journal has also changed: the trim size from  $15.5 \times 23.0$  cm to  $19.3 \times 26.0$  cm and a two-column layout has been adopted. These formatting changes lead to papers being more pleasant and easy to read and thus more attractive. Furthermore, each published article now clearly cites the name of the Associated Editor that handled it, and authors are

invited to add a brief description (less than 100–150 words) of their biography if willing to do so. Finally, each published issue of *BioControl* now has an aesthetically pleasing full-coloured cover.

Besides the efficiency of all Associated Editors, the success of *BioControl* is also deeply rooted with the professional Editorial Office which is provided by the publisher. This team, coupled with a well-designed web site handling the manuscripts (<http://www.editorialmanager.com/bico/>), contributes to the smooth and rapid processing of all manuscripts submitted.

Globally, *BioControl* success reflects a collective commitment in which authors send us their finest and most exciting research in the field of biological control, and both Associated Editors and reviewers provide rapid and thorough evaluation. This is what motivates us to launch the journal into a new era, hoping that the success will continue over the years and that the ISI Journal Citation Index will increase. For this, I invite all scientists working on biological control to submit us their most innovative, stimulating and top-level manuscripts.