Report of the IAVS Publications Committee: 2022-2023

Peter R. Minchin
Vice President for Publications (Publications Officer)

August 30, 2023

1. Publications Committee

The IAVS Publications Committee currently consists of Peter Minchin, Chair (US), Bob Peet (US), Hans Henrik Bruun (DK), Jessica Gurevitch (US), Tomáš Herben (CZ), Michael Manthey (DE), Laco Mucina (AU), Martin Zobel (EE), and Orsolya Valkó (HU), with Milan Chytrý being the non-voting representative of the JVS/AVS Chief Editors and Jürgen Dengler being the non-voting representative of the VCS Chief Editors.


Both the Journal of Vegetation Science (JVS) and Applied Vegetation Science (AVS) continue to do well. Extensive information on circulation and sales, readership, article downloads, content management, and many other topics is provided in the 2022 Publisher’s Report from Wiley and the 2022 report from the Chief Editors. We thank the Chief Editors (Milan Chytrý, Jodi Price, Viktoria Wagner, and Valerio Pillar), Associate Editors, and Editorial Review Boards of JVS and AVS for the wonderful job they are doing for these two journals.

**Availability**

The total number of institutions that purchased a subscription license for JVS and AVS increased from 7,098 in 2021 to 7,651 in 2022 (an increase of 8%). As in previous years, a majority of institutions purchased a Wiley license, which gives access to a range of Wiley titles, rather than a traditional subscription. A total of 2,825 institutions had access via “transformational agreements” which cover both subscription access and Open Access publishing. Only 4 institutions accessed JVS via traditional subscriptions and 5 purchased traditional subscriptions for AVS. Traditional subscriptions are obviously on the way out.

In 2022, JVS published 21 open access articles, a decrease of 48% from the 40 open access articles in 2021. AVS published 24 open access articles, a 20% decrease from 30 published in 2021. For comparison, the percentage increase in open access publishing across all journals in the Plant Sciences category from 2021 to 2022 was 21.9%, so the decreases experienced by JVS and AVS are contrary to the general trend. We believe that this is at least partly due to the unusually high APC that Wiley charges for open access publishing in JVS and AVS. This point will be revisited later in this report in relation to the new publishing agreement with Wiley.

In 2022, Wiley’s philanthropic initiatives gave low-cost or free access to current content in JVS and AVS to 4,304 institutions in developing countries (down 7.6% from 2021). Though we are happy that Wiley’s generosity allows our colleagues and their students in the developing world to access our journals, we are concerned that the number of institutions decreased and will follow up with Wiley to find out why.

**Authorship & Readership**

Our Wiley journals continue to be highly international in both authorship and readership. Of the 63 articles published in JVS in 2022, the countries with the highest numbers of corresponding authors were United States (9), Brazil (7), Germany (6), China (5), Czech Republic (5), and Spain (4). Of the 73 AVS articles published in 2022, the countries with
the highest numbers of corresponding authors were Argentina (8), the United States (8), Germany (6), China (5), Czech Republic (5), and Brazil (4).

The international nature of our readership is shown by the statistics for article downloads and online traffic by country. The top ten countries for online downloads of JVS in 2022 were China, US, Germany, UK, Australia, Canada, Brazil, Spain, France, and the Netherlands. For AVS, the top ten countries for downloads in 2022 were US, China, Germany, UK, Australia, France, Italy, Spain, Brazil, and Czech Republic. In 2022, the number of article downloads from Wiley Online Library, PubMed, and other third-party databases decreased by 7% from 2021 levels for JVS and decreased by 5.7% for AVS. For comparison, the average decrease in article downloads from 2021 to 2022 across all Wiley journals in the Ecology subject area was 4.8%, so the decreases for both JVS and AVS were somewhat greater than average.

**Impact Factors**
The 2-year Impact Factor for 2022 was 2.849 for JVS (down 15.9% from 2021) and 2.785 for AVS (down 18.8% from 2021).

**Output and submissions**
In the 2021-2023 publishing contract with Wiley, it was agreed that we should aim for an annual increase in the number of papers published in JVS and AVS of 10%. For 2022, this target was not reached for either journal. In fact, JVS saw a decrease of 64% in published articles and AVS experienced a decline of 32%. These decreases are worrying, especially in the light of the growth targets that Wiley is proposing in our new publishing agreement (see later in this report).

We also saw a decrease in the number of submissions in 2022 for both JVS (down 15.7%) and AVS (down 2.3%). Across all Wiley journals in the Ecology subject area, there was an average decrease in submissions of 9.9% between 2021 and 2022. Clearly, if the number of submissions is not increased for both journals, it will be difficult to achieve growth in output in the coming years. The Chief Editors are exploring ways to increase the number of submissions, including increasing the visibility of the journals on social media, soliciting content for special thematic issues, and encouraging IAVS members to publish in our own journals.

**Production time**
In 2022, average days from receipt of a final manuscript to Early View publication was 32 days for JVS (a decrease of 13.5% from 2021) and 31 days for AVS (a decrease of 8.8%). Despite these improvements, publication for both journals is still slower than the Life Sciences average (25 days) and the average across Wiley journals (26 days).

**Revenue**
Under our 2021-2023 publishing contract with Wiley, IAVS receives a royalty of 48% of total income for JVS and AVS. Revenue received from our Wiley journals continues to be the major source of income for IAVS and allows us to pay our administration costs and fund many initiatives that benefit our members (e.g. travel awards, young scientist awards, funding for Working Groups, honoraria to allow Chief Editors and Associate Editors to attend the Editors Meeting at the annual symposium, funding of publication costs for Vegetation Classification and Survey during its first three years).

For JVS, the total net revenue received by IAVS from Wiley in 2022 was £121,440, which is an 8.9% decline from 2021 (£133,281). Net revenue from AVS in 2022 was £49,008, which is a 7.2% increase over 2021 (£45,712). The total income for both journals in 2022 (£170,448) was down 4.8% from 2021 (£178,993).
3. Change in Wiley team

In May, 2023 Carol Clark informed us that she would be leaving Wiley. Our new publisher is Gillian Greenough. Since 2016 Gillian has managed a portfolio of life and physical science journals at Wiley, working closely with societies and external editors on strategic development. Before Wiley, Gillian was a senior editor at Cambridge University Press, where she was responsible for acquiring and managing a portfolio of proprietary and society-owned journals across a wide range of disciplines, with a primary focus on economics and politics. Prior to joining Cambridge, Gillian worked at Springer Science and Business Media, with responsibility for a list of journals and books in economics and politics. We have established a good working relationship with Gillian and look forward to working with her to ensure the continued success of JVS and AVS.

4. New publishing agreement with Wiley

We are currently operating under a 3-year publishing contract with Wiley for 2021-2023. In December 2022 both IAVS and Wiley agreed to negotiate a new publishing contract. Wiley has sent us a draft of a new 3-year contract for 2024-2026, which is currently being reviewed by the Publications Committee.

Please note that the draft contract is CONFIDENTIAL. Key points about the draft contract are as follows:

- Both JVS and AVS would remain hybrid journals for the duration of the new contract. There is no intention to flip either journal to gold Open Access during this contract term.
- The Article Publication Charge (APC) for open access publishing in the hybrid journals is stated in the draft contract as 2610 GBP, which with current exchange rates is lower than the current APC of 3910 USD. As discussed below, we should consider negotiating for a lower APC, at least in line with other society-owned ecological journals.
- The new contract sets growth targets in the number of published papers for both journals. They are 15% in 2024, 20% in 2025, and 7% in 2026. We need to consider whether it is feasible to meet these growth targets because the draft contract allows Wiley to terminate its publishing agreement with us if we fail to achieve them.
- Royalty rate remains at 48%.

We would like the input of IAVS Council on some issues that will need to be discussed and negotiated with Wiley, leading to a 2024-2026 publishing contract that is acceptable to IAVS.

Article Publication Charge (APC)
In previous years we have questioned the high APC that is charged for open access publication in JVS and AVS under the hybrid model but Wiley has not shown any flexibility and has not provided a sensible rationale for the current fee, which is set in US dollars at $3910. The draft contract sets the APC in British pounds as £2610. This appears to be out of line with the APCs currently charged for other society-owned hybrid journals published by Wiley (Table 1).
Table 1: Current Article Publication Charges for society-owned hybrid journals published by Wiley. Journals are ranked in descending order by APC. Impact Factor (IF) for 2022 is shown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal Title</th>
<th>APC USD $</th>
<th>APC GBP £</th>
<th>APC EUR €</th>
<th>Owner Society/ Association</th>
<th>IF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Phytologist</td>
<td>$5,510</td>
<td>£3,680</td>
<td>€4,620</td>
<td>New Phytologist Foundation</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology Letters</td>
<td>$5,050</td>
<td>£3,350</td>
<td>€4,230</td>
<td>Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Vegetation Science</td>
<td>$3,910</td>
<td>£2,610</td>
<td>€3,260</td>
<td>IAVS</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Vegetation Science</td>
<td>$3,910</td>
<td>£2,610</td>
<td>€3,260</td>
<td>IAVS</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Applications</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td>£2,400</td>
<td>€3,000</td>
<td>Ecological Society of America</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Monographs</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td>£2,400</td>
<td>€3,000</td>
<td>Ecological Society of America</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td>£2,400</td>
<td>€3,000</td>
<td>Ecological Society of America</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td>£2,400</td>
<td>€3,000</td>
<td>Ecological Society of America</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Ecology</td>
<td>$3,400</td>
<td>£2,270</td>
<td>€2,830</td>
<td>British Ecological Society</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Ecology</td>
<td>$3,400</td>
<td>£2,270</td>
<td>€2,830</td>
<td>British Ecological Society</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annals of Applied Biology</td>
<td>$3,240</td>
<td>£2,160</td>
<td>€2,730</td>
<td>Association of Applied Biologists</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austral Ecology</td>
<td>$3,150</td>
<td>£2,100</td>
<td>€2,650</td>
<td>Ecological Society of Australia</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant Biology</td>
<td>$3,090</td>
<td>£2,060</td>
<td>€2,580</td>
<td>German Society for Plant Sciences and the Royal Botanical Society of the Netherlands</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Research</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>£2,000</td>
<td>€2,500</td>
<td>The Ecological Society of Japan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Ecology</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>£2,000</td>
<td>€2,500</td>
<td>The Society of Population Ecology</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant Species Biology</td>
<td>$2,750</td>
<td>£1,850</td>
<td>€2,300</td>
<td>The Society for the Study of Species Biology</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oikos</td>
<td>$3,300</td>
<td>£1,700</td>
<td>€2,480</td>
<td>Nordic Ecological Society</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Management &amp; Restoration</td>
<td>$2,550</td>
<td>£1,667</td>
<td>€2,083</td>
<td>Ecological Society of Australia</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biotropica</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>£1,600</td>
<td>€2,000</td>
<td>Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Journal of Botany</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>£1,500</td>
<td>€1,800</td>
<td>Botanical Society of America</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic Journal of Botany</td>
<td>$2,730</td>
<td>£1,340</td>
<td>€2,060</td>
<td>Nordic Ecological Society</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that JVS and AVS are next in order by APC below New Phytologist and Ecology Letters, both of which are very high impact journals. The APC for JVS and AVS is substantially higher than the British Ecological Society journals and the Ecological Society of American journals, all of which have much higher Impact Factors. It is difficult to see why a prospective author would choose to pay a higher APC to publish in JVS or AVS when the cost would be substantially lower to publish in a higher impact journal like Ecology, Ecological Applications, Journal of Ecology or Oikos.

Now is the time to negotiate with Wiley for a more equitable APC. A starting point for negotiation might be £2000. Comments and input from Council are welcomed.

Growth targets

Our current contract sets annual growth targets of 10% per year for both JVS and AVS, but these are written as aspirational goals only, with no penalty for not reaching them. In contrast, the draft contract sets higher growth targets in the first two years and states that Wiley may terminate the contract if the targets are not met. We need to carefully consider whether the proposed growth targets of 15% in 2024 and 20% in 2025.

Though the targets initially seem high, for JVS they produce projected numbers of articles in 2-26 that are lower than what was achieved in 2021 (Table 2). For AVS, they lead to a number of articles in 2026 that is only 8 higher than achieved in 2021 (increase of 7.4%).
Table 2: Number of articles published in JVS and AVS in 2020-2022 and projected numbers under the growth targets in the draft contract.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2024</th>
<th>2025</th>
<th>2026</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Vegetation Science</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Vegetation Science</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We would like to know if Council thinks that the proposed growth targets are achievable. Should we try to negotiate lower growth rates? What ideas do Council members have on strategies to increase the number of quality submissions for both journals, hence leading to growth in published articles? Current ideas include:

- Encourage IAVS members to submit their best work to JVS/AVS.
- Continue increasing editor driven referrals.
- Consider expanding the scope of the journals.
- Consider addition of new article types.
- Increase geographical reach and career-stage diversity
- Continue to support the diversity of the editorial board.
- Utilize the Editors’ network to increase the journals’ visibility.
- Promote the journals on relevant forums/platforms.
- Support Guest Editors to increase publication of special issues.

5. Vegetation Classification and Survey (VCS)

Publication of Vegetation Classification and Survey (VCS) began in January 2020. The publisher is Pensoft (https://pensoft.net/). VCS is an Open Access journal published entirely online. A detailed report on VCS for 2022 has been provided by the Chief Editors of VCS, Jürgen Dengler, Idoia Biurrun, Florian Jansen, and Wolfgang Willner. There is also a report provided by the publisher.

The 2022 volume of VCS published 23 articles, a few less than the target of 25. So far in 2023, 14 articles have been published and given the number of articles under review and the predicted number of additional submissions, VCS is on track to publish 30 articles in 2023.

Council previously voted to approve financial support for VCS until mid-2023, by which time it was hoped that it would be listed in Web of Science and have an Impact Factor. Although VCS was accepted for indexing in Scopus in February, 2022 (and received its first CiteScore of 2.0 in May 2023), it was not listed in the Web of Science by mid-2023, hence does not yet have an Impact Factor. On 25 August, 2023 the Chief Editors of VCS received the good news that VCS passed the Editorial Triage step of evaluation for Web of Science and will now undergo a full editorial evaluation. This process may take several months. We are hopeful that VCS will pass this evaluation and have an Impact Factor by 2024.

The IAVS 2023 budget included 12000 EUR to support APCs for papers published in VCS, when authors did not have other means to pay the APC. As it turned out, only 3125 EUR had been spent for this purpose by 30 June, 2023, so the Governing Board approved the continuation of APC support during the second half of 2023. Most likely, the remaining 8875 EUR will be sufficient to cover the APCs for the remainder of the papers accepted for 2023 (it would cover the APC costs for 13 of the expected 16 additional articles and it is highly likely that at least three papers will have authors with additional means of APC support). If not, we ask that Council authorize the Governing Board to approve payment of the additional costs (which would not exceed 2000 EUR).
The Chief Editors of VCS have submitted a plan to transition VCS to effectively break even by 2024 and start to return a small profit to IAVS by 2025. Though such a plan is based on many assumptions, it seems reasonable.

VCS is an excellent investment for IAVS, since it provides a third publication outlet for our members with a different scope than JVS and AVS. We are very grateful for all the hard work that the Chief Editors, Associate Editors, and Editorial Review Board have done to get the journal up and running and make it a success. To ensure that VCS continues to flourish, we ask IAVS members to contribute papers and to encourage their colleagues to consider VCS for papers that fall within its scope.

6. Surveys of Authors, Reviewers, and Editors

The Publications Committee is in the process of developing surveys to provide us with useful feedback about the experiences of authors, reviewers, and editors for our three journals, JVS, AVS, and VCS. We expect that these surveys will be ready to deploy by October, 2023 so that the results can be analyzed before the end of 2023.

7. IAVS Bulletin

Monika Janišová, has continued to do a great job as editor of the IAVS Bulletin. We are very grateful for the work that she does to make the Bulletin a success. Anna Kuzemko assists with layout and design and Rob Allen helps with linguistic editing. The Bulletin is e-mailed directly to IAVS members and also made available through the IAVS website. Monika is always seeking contributions for the Bulletin. If you have an idea for an interesting article, please contact her (monika.janisova@gmail.com).