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# Bulletin of the Geobotanical Institute ETH

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## Editorial policy

The *Bulletin of the Geobotanical Institute ETH* was first published in 1928 as the annual report of the Institute, and it has always included some scientific contributions. The *Bulletin* continues to report the activities of the Institute on an annual basis, but the main contents of the journal are more scientific papers. Although

the *Bulletin* presents current results and new research projects of the Institute, we would like to include a growing number of contributions from outside the Institute. The focus of the journal is on ecology and systematics of plants and fungi, but contributions on interactions of plants and animals and on landscape ecology are also welcome. Descriptive and experimental studies of communities, populations, individuals and their interaction with other organisms are all acceptable.

## Instructions to authors

The *Bulletin* is published on an annual basis in July (price per volume 40 Sfr). The deadline for submission is the end of February. Manuscripts in English are preferred, but German contributions will also be accepted. Three copies of the manuscript with all illustrations and tables should be send with a covering letter to Dr. S. Güsewell, Geobotanical Institute ETH, Zürichbergstrasse 38, CH-8044 Zürich, Tel. +41-1-632-4307, Fax: +41-1-632-1215, [guesewell@geobot.umnw.ethz.ch](mailto:guesewell@geobot.umnw.ethz.ch). Authors must confirm that the manuscript has not been submitted elsewhere. All parts of the manuscript must be typed double-spaced, with margins of 2.5 cm. The style of the manuscript (especially of the references) should be adapted to the latest issue of the *Bulletin*. Abbreviations and symbols must be defined when they are first mentioned. The elements of the manuscript should be presented in the conventional order, including up to six keywords. For a description of these elements we refer to the current international standard of scientific papers. Manuscripts are submitted to two reviewers for evaluation of their scientific soundness and significance. Authors will generally be notified of acceptance, rejection, or need for revision within 1–2 months. Fifty offprints are supplied free of charge. Additional reprints may be ordered when authors will receive the proofs for verification.

## Preface

### PETER J. EDWARDS

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Publish or perish! The first time I heard this phrase was as an undergraduate student in the late 1960's. My tutor had been telling me about the great Swedish palaeobotanist, R. Florin, whose lifetime work on the morphology of extinct conifers is published in a few major monographs. Drawing a sharp contrast to the careful and measured style of Florin's publications, my tutor went on to ridicule what he saw as the excessive pressure upon academics in the USA to appear frequently in print, whether or not they had anything new to say. "Fortunately", he continued, "in Cambridge we have been spared this compulsion to publish or perish; every 5 or 10 years, perhaps, an academic should publish a paper - but it should be something really substantial!"

Of course, all that has changed, not only in Cambridge but in all of Europe; academics now have to justify their existence in terms of output, measured in terms of numbers of papers published, numbers of citations, impact factors, and so on. As someone who regularly sits on professorial appointment committees, I know how the eyes of all committee members (including my own, I must confess) skim through the CV's of applicants, paying scant attention to the documented achievements in teaching, administration and public relations, or to the carefully expounded ideas about how students should be educated, and looking only at the length and weightiness of the publications list.

This urgency to publish is reflected in the way we train our doctoral students. The traditional dissertation, with its detailed review

of the literature at the beginning and an extended discussion at the end, has all but disappeared; doctoral candidates are now expected to submit their work in the form of three or four papers, preferably already published, but otherwise submitted or ready for submission.

I do not wish to suggest that this increasing urgency to publish is necessarily undesirable. In the past, many doctoral students saw the production of the dissertation as an end in itself, and made no attempt to publish their work. Thus, huge amounts of valuable research results remain largely inaccessible to the scientific community between the grey paper covers of the traditional thesis. It is surely a good thing that doctoral students are now intensively trained in how to write effectively for scientific journals. It is also beneficial that their work is evaluated and criticised, not only by their supervisor and PhD examiners, but also through the peer review process operated by journals. However, there are signs that the pressure to publish is going too far. Today, it seems, we expect not only doctoral students to publish, but even candidates applying for PhD training. We have observed several advertisements for PhD positions in recent months in which applicants are required to submit their CV *plus a list of publications or manuscripts!* As for this issue of the *Bulletin*, we include a mix of papers, from doctoral students as well as established research workers. However, so far as I know, none is from a candidate for a doctoral position.

