

EDITORIAL

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It is with some trepidation that I take on the task of replacing Allan Wilson as Editor of the *Rangeland Journal*. Allan has set an extremely high standard and it really is a hard act to follow. However, with the help of our excellent team of Associate Editors and the cooperation of authors and readers, I hope we will continue to produce a Journal with the same high standards.

A second reason for my trepidation is the turmoil facing the scientific publication industry. There have been dramatic rises in the costs of publication of serials over the last few years and Institutional Libraries are finding increasing difficulty in meeting these costs with declining budgets. The result has been almost annual rounds of cancellation of serials. Some of the cost rises have been because of changes in the value of the Australian dollar and some because of the increasing number of scientific periodicals falling into the hands of commercial publishing houses. The result is usually a dramatic rise in the cost to libraries, if not to individual subscribers. The *Rangeland Journal*, with its honorary Associate Editors, an Editor who is paid a small honorarium, and with publication costs limited by the excellent work of Malcolm Howes, is remarkably good value as far as scientific periodicals go. Somehow, we must keep it that way.

The rise in the availability of electronic versions of serials is another challenge. When the move to this mode of publication commenced, there was a perception that the rise in the costs of serials would be stemmed because the electronic format was seen as being cheaper. This does not appear to be the case. Library subscriptions to the electronic versions seem to be coming in at about the same price and, in addition, it seems as if the user will have to pay extra for hard copies of papers downloaded and printed. Therefore, the cost could well be higher in the long run although perhaps more convenient because searching and browsing can be done in the comfort of your own office and/or home. Fortunately, I am basically an optimist, otherwise I would never have taken on the job of Editor and I look forward to the challenge of guiding the Journal through a few more turbulent years.

I believe that the *Rangeland Journal* is an important publication for rangeland scientists, advisers, academics, students and policy makers in Australia, and increasingly in the US. It accepts papers on all aspects of rangelands which are very broadly defined. Some people only think of rangelands as grazing lands in the semi-arid and arid parts of the world but this is far from the truth. For instance, economic and environmental constraints have meant less emphasis on sowing pastures as crops in the higher rainfall parts of temperate Australia and more emphasis on using grazing animals as tools for management. Pature management in this context is rangeland management and I would welcome relevant papers for the Journal

The present system of research and development funding seems to be having an impact on scientific periodicals. Funding bodies are now insisting on the immediate extension of research results to client industries, usually before adequate peer review. Researchers are put in the position of having to produce a detailed final report for the funding body and at the same time, become involved in the production of extension material. In addition, agencies and institutions insist on the continual submission of yet more research proposals so that the inflow of external research funds is maintained. I believe that this system limits the publication of results with proper peer review that is so essential for good science. I know of some really good data sets that should become part of the permanent record and one of my aims is to stimulate people to make the effort to get them into the *Rangeland Journal*. I look forward to receiving manuscripts related to such projects next year.