

Editorial

Changing times for *Functional Plant Biology*

The screen saver on my computer is a detail from Heironymus Bosch's 'The Last Judgement'. Painted in 1504, the image depicts monsters and devils performing unspeakable acts upon souls too wicked in life to be taken up to everlasting glory.

The image reflects the anxieties of the late medieval period. It was a time of great social perturbation and political upheaval. The disturbance was driven in no small part by the new technology of Gutenberg's moveable type printing press.

I keep the image on my computer to remind me that we are living in a time of similar transition. I am working as a publisher during a period of great change, driven principally by the new and disrupting technology of the Internet.

The Internet now offers most researchers better access to more journal articles than ever before. It allows new ways of publishing. Some journals are experimenting with new forms of peer review conducted in an open online forum, for instance *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics* (<http://www.atmospheric-chemistry-and-physics.net/>). Researchers are creating databases of relevant content including journal literature. arXiv (<http://arxiv.org/>) is an excellent example of this. Less formal forms of communication between scholars are now possible. Doubtless readers of *Functional Plant Biology* will be familiar with vods, pods, blogs and wikis.

The ease with which journal articles can be distributed through the Web is testing copyright law to breaking point. The advent of organisations like OAK Law 9 (<http://www.oaklaw.qut.edu.au/>), which advocates overhaul of international copyright laws to align with user practice on the web, are symptomatic of the great change that is occurring.

The Internet is pushing development of new publishing business models. Consortia of libraries now buy access to suites of content. Or you can pay to download an individual article. Open access models where authors pay publishing fees are being trialled by many journals including *Functional Plant Biology*. See <http://publish.csiro.au/nid/105/aid/9361.htm>

In all this turmoil, faculty is expected to be more accountable for the research funds it receives. Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) and Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in the UK seek to ensure taxpayers get value for the money invested in research. In the USA, the National Institutes of Health are now requiring recipients of their funds to deposit copies of their research into open repositories of content in an effort to improve the return on research investment.

How should a journal respond to this shifting environment? The evidence is that researchers still value journals and the more prestigious the journal the more they are likely to publish in them (Rowlands and Nicholas 2006). Researchers will devote their limited reading time to the journals they trust. It follows, therefore, that a journal should seek to constantly improve its reputation with its readers and authors.

It is with this in mind that I am delighted to announce the appointment of Dr Rana Munns as Editor-in-Chief of *Functional Plant Biology*. Rana's own reputation for excellence, her ideas and hard work are all entirely consistent with our plans for *Functional Plant Biology* to forge a leading position in the plant science community.

Rana is a Chief Research Scientist with CSIRO Plant Industry. Her research area is stress physiology, and she is currently leading a project to improve salt tolerance of wheat. She has extensive editorial experience as author of a hundred papers in international journals, and a regular reviewer for many plant biology journals. She has been on editorial boards of eight journals. Her publications are highly cited. She is President-Elect of the Australian Society of Plant Scientists.

She has many new and exciting ideas for consolidating the strengths of *Functional Plant Biology*, and quickly moving it forward to embrace the important emerging areas of plant science. We have determined to change the journal's editorial structure. We will announce the full editorial team later this year.

Rana takes over a journal in good shape. This is due to the efforts of the previous editorial team. I would like to thank Jennifer Henry for her work as Managing Editor of *FPB*. CSIRO PUBLISHING is also indebted to Graham Farquhar, who chaired the Editorial Advisory Committee and its members Murray Badger, Christine Beveridge, Mike Clearwater, David Day, Martha Ludwig, Jim Reid, Linda Tabe, Mark Tester, Steve Tyerman and Susanne von Caemmerer. Our thanks to all these supporters.

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Reference

Rowlands I, Nicholas D (2006) The changing scholarly communication landscape: an international survey of senior researchers. *Learned Publishing* **19**, 31–55.