

International Journal of Wildland Fire celebrates 20 years of publication

In 2011 the *International Journal of Wildland Fire* (*IJWF*) completed a landmark 20 years as the only journal dedicated to publishing peer-reviewed research on all aspects of wildland fire. *IJWF* was started in 1990 as the scientific journal of the newly-formed International Association of Wildland Fire (IAWF), under the leadership of Andrea Koonce, Jason Greenlee, Mike Weber and William Sommers. The journal was designed to meet the needs of the rapidly growing international wildland fire science community for a dedicated, multidisciplinary peer-reviewed outlet for their research that would disseminate new fire research information within the science community, as well as to practitioners and policymakers who need to ensure their policies and practices reflect the latest scientific evidence.

Until 1999, the journal was self-published by the Association, but by 1998 publication had become irregular due to problems with the business process model for the journal. To address this, the IAWF Board began looking at options for a more professional and higher visibility approach to publication. After extensive discussions with several scientific publishing companies, IAWF accepted a proposal presented by **CSIRO PUBLISHING**, which took over publication and management of the journal, under contract with *IJWF*, in 2000. An editorial team of scientific editor Gwynfor Richards, of Brandon University, Canada, and managing editors Kelvin Hirsch, of the Canadian Forestry Service, and Laurie Martinelli, of **CSIRO PUBLISHING**, produced issues 2–4 of volume 9 in December 2000.

With the beginning of Volume 10, **CSIRO PUBLISHING** and IAWF introduced a number of significant enhancements, including a new print format, a dedicated website with an archive and Early Alert feature, and establishment of an Editorial Advisory Committee (EAC) to work with the Managing Editor (at **CSIRO PUBLISHING**) and the Scientific Editor (at *IJWF*) on establishing policy for the journal. Volume 10 cleared a large backlog of papers that had developed and also published a special issue on integrating spatial technologies for fire management for a total of 430 pages. The impact factor (an indicator of how widely *IJWF* papers are cited) improved slightly, to 0.400 (rank 23 of 29 in Forestry). In 2002, *IJWF* was further restructured to a body of 21 Associate Editors under the leadership of a new Editor-in-Chief, Mike Flannigan of the Canadian Forest Service. As management and quality of the journal improved, the number of downloads and impact factor both increased substantially from 2002 to the present. The EAC, which is appointed by the IAWF, continues to monitor the progress of the journal and provide guidance to the editorial team. As submissions increased, the EAC agreed that a team of two co-Editors would be better able to handle the workload, and in 2009, when Mike Flannigan stepped down after 8 years of dedicated service, *IJWF* made the transition to the current Scientific Editor team of Prof. Stefan Doerr and Dr Susan Conard.

IJWF has developed remarkably since **CSIRO PUBLISHING** took over the operational journal management and publication in 2000. Manuscript processing procedures and outreach to the international fire research community have improved, and the ISI impact factor of the journal has risen from a low of 0.264 for 1990 to 2.22 for 2010. *IJWF* is now ranked in the top 10% of forestry journals (5th of 54 journals). All of these factors have resulted in a large rise in submissions to the journal, and steps have been taken to improve throughput time and reduce publication backlog. After **CSIRO PUBLISHING** initially took over management of the *IJWF*, 4 issues (~500 pages) per year were produced in 2000–06. The journal shifted from four to six issues (800 pages) per year in 2007. In 2009 the publication rate was further increased to 8 issues (over 1000 pages) per year to accommodate rising submission rates.

The journal has worked to remain aligned with, and in some cases pre-empt, trends in publishing and delivery technologies. For example, as of the end of 2011, all accepted papers are now published in final form as Online Early on the website as soon as they have completed the production and layout process, enabling them to be accessed and cited before they are assigned to a print issue. We have also reduced the time from manuscript completion to printing considerably, and most papers are now published in print issue within several months of appearing early online. Another recent development has been the switch to ScholarOne for manuscript handling, which includes a capability for plagiarism checking of submissions, and the introduction of social media tools.

These technical and management improvements are good news for the journal, the authors and readers, but the main objective for *IJWF* remains publication of the very best wildland fire science, where both authors and readers can be guaranteed of the high quality of the published material. Central to sustaining the journal's standards is the team of Associate Editors, who are experts in their respective fields and who provide an invaluable service to the journal.

The *IJWF* was started as a journal dedicated to all aspects of wildland fire research, and as important topics in that research have broadened and evolved so has the journal content. Notable changes include increased content in social science, remote sensing, climate change, fire–atmosphere interactions, paleo-climate and fire history, global importance and effects of fire, and operational research, as well as wider international representation of research in areas such as Asia and Africa. Of course the more traditional core of fire behaviour, fire prediction and fire ecology continues to be an important part of journal content. We continue to expand the Associate Editor team to respond to the growing and increasingly interdisciplinary body of wildland fire research, which employs an ever changing repertoire of field, laboratory and modelling techniques.

In celebration of the 20th anniversary of the journal, we have now posted a full listing of all past papers online, as well

as a list of the most-frequently cited papers over the past 20 years.^A We invite all readers to take a look at these, to continue to submit your excellent research to us, and to encourage your libraries to carry *IJWF* and your colleagues to consider us as an outlet for their publications.

We also take this opportunity to thank to all of our readers, contributors, Associate Editors, past editors, reviewers, our sponsoring organisation (IAWF), members of the EAC and all of those who were involved in starting the journal and in supporting it as it has grown and changed.

We are excited about the improvements that have been made in *IJWF*, and about the increase in visibility and stature that these improvements have led to. The current editorial team is committed to ongoing improvements in the journal, and we look forward to *IJWF* continuing to serve the wildland fire community for many years in the future.

Susan G. Conard, Editor-in-Chief

Stefan Doerr, Editor-in-Chief

Richard Hecker, Publisher

^ASee <http://www.publish.csiro.au/media/client/WFauths20yrs.pdf>.