

Behind the Curve: The Need for Capacity-Building in Research Nongovernment Organizations and Other Nonbiomedical Publishing

Moderator:

Philippa J Benson
Conservation International
Washington, DC

Speakers:

Anthony Rylands
Conservation International
Washington, DC

Sue Silver

Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment
Silver Spring, Maryland

Todd A Carpenter

BioOne
Washington, DC

Reporter:

Barbara Gastel
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas

Scientific periodicals in conservation, ecology, and related disciplines often lack the resources available to biomedical journals. They also tend to receive less attention in such venues as CSE meetings. This session, however, focused on such publications.

Anthony Rylands, described by moderator Philippa J Benson as the “leading neotropical primateologist in the world”, discussed the five periodicals published through the Primate Specialist Group of the Species Survival Commission of the World Conservation Union. The periodicals are an annual journal, titled *Primate Conservation*, and four regional newsletters: *African Primates*, *Asian Primates*, *Neotropical Primates*, and *Lemur News*. Rylands focused on *Neotropical Primates*, which he edits.

Like the other three newsletters, *Neotropical Primates* began in the early 1990s and has a volunteer editor; at the time of the CSE meeting, 45 issues had appeared. *Neotropical Primates* includes both full-length scientific articles, which are peer-reviewed, and short articles, some of which are peer-reviewed; it also contains news reports, meeting announcements and abstracts, and lists of recent publications. The print run of *Neotropical Primates* is 2000, and print costs are covered by grants. Like the other newsletters, *Neotropical Primates* is available free to Primate Specialist Group members and others; it also is openly accessible online. Rylands said that helping people to publish is a major function of his newsletter, and he mentioned having helped authors to rewrite articles. He observed that such periodicals play key roles in capacity-building, research, and conservation. He resists pressure to convert his newsletter into a journal, because he considers the news aspect important.

Sue Silver, editor-in-chief of *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, presented what she called “a tale of two journals”. She compared the startups of two journals with which she has been involved: *The Lancet Oncology*, which Elsevier launched in 2000, and her current journal, which the Ecological Society of America launched in 2003. Both journals are peer-reviewed, consist mainly of review articles but also include various other content, are interdisciplinary, are intended to be accessible to people outside the specialty, and are in full color. The two journals had similar times from initial preparations until launch (a little less than a year), and both originally anticipated taking similar times (about 7 years) to break even financially. The main difference has been financial: Elsevier could

devote more money to the startup of *The Lancet Oncology*, and this journal has been able to generate much more advertising revenue. Also, Silver noted, the mission of an ecology journal can be more difficult to define than that of a medical journal. Until recently, she said, ecology journals tended to function only for communication among scientists, but now greater awareness of other audiences, such as policy-makers and resource managers, seems to exist.

Todd A Carpenter, director of business development, described how BioOne—a nonprofit collaboration of scholars, libraries, societies, and a commercial printer—has been working to increase online access to biology journals. (For many users, he noted, “if it’s not online, it doesn’t exist”.) Carpenter explained that BioOne assists scientific societies by providing services analogous to those of a large publisher—for example, an electronic publishing platform, technology services, assistance in creating ancillary revenue streams and programs, and group purchasing and negotiating power. In addition to helping to place new journal content online, BioOne has partnered with JSTOR to post back issues of more than 100 biology journals. It also is interested in posting valuable scientific literature other than that in journals—for example, selected books, datasets, research reports, conference proceedings, and PhD theses—and therefore is developing quality standards for gray literature. “BioOne was founded with the belief that librarians and not-for-profit publishers have more in common than not, especially in protecting the independent journals programs”, he concluded. “Working together, we can build capacity and increase access to quality scholarship.” 