2017 was the second complete year of publication of the new journal, *Agricultural & Environmental Letters (A&EL)*. This journal publishes manuscripts under the following categories:

1. Editorials, including invited Guest Editorials.
2. Commentaries – commentary on relevant issues related to science, policy, research trends, business trends, exciting new discoveries, food security, etc. These can be as long as 2500 words (approximately four published pages). Brief Commentaries are no longer than 1000 words.
3. Letters to the Editor – Letters to the Editor are usually no longer than 500 words in length. They can be as long as 1000 words (approximately two published pages) if there is detailed dialog that results from the papers published in *A&EL*.
4. Research Letters – Manuscripts that provide research information and other related information, up to 2500 words in length (approximately four published pages). Research letters include an abstract and may be divided into sections to bring organization to the manuscript.

The total number of submissions seems to be similar to that of 2016. In 2016 there were a total of 48 manuscripts submitted for publication. To date, with about three weeks left in the 2017 year, we have received 42 submissions. The average download per article is 452. These download rates are approaching or on par with our other society journals. From January 1 through September 30 of 2017, there were a total of 10668 full text downloads. *A&EL*’s Twitter account, @AgricEnvLetters, now has more than 280 followers, compared with 140 this time last year.

One important goal of this new journal is fast review and publication. The average time from submission to acceptance this past year was 41 days. For rejected manuscripts this time was even shorter before a decision was communicated back to the authors.

The *Agricultural and Environmental Letters* journal is moving forward in obtaining an Impact Factor. Clarivate (previously Thomson Reuters) selected *A&EL* to be cited in their Emerging Sources Citation Index, beginning with the 2017 volume. This was done in November of 2013 and is the first step in getting an Impact Factor. Having an Impact Factor for the journal will be helpful in getting more submissions.

Authors continue to struggle with meeting the word limit of the *A&EL* journal. The average published length of article rose from 4.3 pages in 2016 to 4.5 pages in 2017. This is in spite of efforts to hold to a rather strict word limit of 2500 words (minus Abstract and list of references). However, the feedback from authors is that once they go through the exercise of being more concise and focused, they see the value of this type of paper.
The journal has become a place where people are submitting opinion pieces, social science related papers and commentaries, etc. In the past, there really has not been a place in our society journals for these types of papers, or at least authors have not viewed our other journals as having this option. I hope this continues along with attracting more of the research oriented papers that fit the criteria of A&EL. It seems like there is a preponderance of papers dealing with soil, agronomic and environmental themes. There are less papers that would fit within the traditional crop science areas, although it is recognized there is a lot of inter-relatedness between crops and other disciplines within our societies.

As of late 2016, authors may choose between two open access licensing options: (1) CC BY https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/ (in summary, You may share immediately with attribution) and (2) CC BY -NC-ND https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/ (in summary, You may share immediately with attribution, but not for commercial or derivative purposes.) Some institutions and funding agencies require the CC BY license. A website and web ad in the Digital Library were created to educate readers and authors about the OA options (see https://dl.sciencesocieties.org/open-access).

Editors’ Conference
The ACSESS Editors Conference at the ASA/CSSA/SSSA headquarters in Madison (held on May 25-26, 2017) continues to be an excellent forum where editors of all of the different society journals meet to discuss issues that are common to all of the journals. Some themes from this year’s conference were those related to data disclosure and data publication, the development of a potential new megajournal, English language editing services, emphasis (requirement?) on promoting the use of ORCID numbers by authors, discussion on preprint servers and how they may impact our journals, and discussion related to new areas of research that our journals should be targeting and encouraging submissions.

Annual Meeting
A meeting of the A&EL Board was held in Tampa during the annual meetings of the ASA/CSSA/SSSA societies on Monday, October 23, 2017 (4:30 PM-5:30 PM).

Because of developing the board with staggered terms, there are new appointments to be made each year, even though the journal is only a little over two years old. All TEs that are currently serving were eligible to serve a second three-year term and all agreed to do so. Ann Edahl, A&EL Managing Editor, provided a written report (attached at the end of this report). A&EL Editor, Warren Dick, summarized his feelings of how the journal seems to be developing and this has also been included in this report. Other items on the agenda included discussion on the need to continue to stress to authors the need to keep to word limits, questions related to manuscript flow during review and an open microphone to hear any concerns or issues that A&EL board members may want to introduce into the meeting. Overall, the consensus of the board was that the journal is a valuable addition to the stable of journals that our societies publish and that, with the passage of time and the addition of an Impact Factor for A&EL, the journal will continue to develop and grow.
Appreciation
Special notes of appreciate are extended to Ann Edahl (managing editor), Bill Cook, (director of publications), Abby Morrison (editorial assistant), Lauren Van Driel (submissions manager), Haley Salazar (marketing specialist) and Tricia Newell (publications marketing coordinator). Of course, it is also important to note the support and great efforts of our societies’ dedicated administrative staff along with our Editors-in-Chiefs C. Wayne Smith (ASA), Dave Myrold (SSSA), and Elizabeth Guertal (CSSA).

Items Requiring Board Attention:
This will be Warren Dick’s third year as Editor of A&EL. He has indicated he will not serve a second term and so a new editor will need to be appointed in 2018 to begin serving January 1, 2019.

Members of the Committee/Editorial Board:
Ellen Bergfeld, Ex Officio Member
Bill Cook, Ex Officio Member
-----------------
Elizabeth Guertal, ASA Editor-in-Chief
David Myrold, SSSA Editor-in-Chief
C. Wayne Smith, CSSA Editor-in-Chief
-----------------
Warren A. Dick, Editor - Agricultural & Environmental Letters (A&EL)
-----------------
Ann Edahl, Managing Editor
-----------------
Thomas DeSutter, Technical Editor
Kimberly Garland-Campbell, Technical Editor
Jerry Hatfield, Technical Editor
Peter Kleinman, Technical Editor
Sharon Papiernik, Technical Editor
Michael Richardson, Technical Editor
Daniel Sweeney, Technical Editor
Hailin Zhang, Technical Editor
-----------------
Veronica Acosta-Martinez, Associate Editor
William Anderson, Associate Editor
Sougata Bardhan, Associate Editor
Brian Beres, Associate Editor
Anthony Buda, ASA Associate Editor
Patrick Carr, ASA Associate Editor
Francis Casey, ASA Associate Editor
William Cox, Associate Editor
Aaron Daigh, Associate Editor
Patrick Drohan, Associate Editor
Georgia Eizenga, Associate Editor
Ryan Haden, Associate Editor
Production
A summary of papers published, total pages, and article length for 2017 is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of papers published in A&EL.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contribution</th>
<th>2017†</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Letter</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter to the Editor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest Editorial</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total pages</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Avg. page length, all types 4.5 4.3

† Year to date (Jan.–Sept.).

Submissions
Table 2 shows the number of submissions, 2015–2017.

Table 2. Submission of A&EL papers in Manuscript Central.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>US submissions</th>
<th>International submissions</th>
<th>Total submissions</th>
<th>% International</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017†</td>
<td>33†</td>
<td>2†</td>
<td>35†</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Year to date (Jan.–Sept.).

Online Usage Statistics
Table 3 shows the online usage statistics for 2017 (January–September 30).

Table 3. Usage statistics for ASA, CSSA, SSSA journals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Full-text downloads</th>
<th>Abstracts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural &amp; Environmental Letters</td>
<td>10668</td>
<td>4806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agronomy Journal</td>
<td>487092</td>
<td>744772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crop Science</td>
<td>797993</td>
<td>997416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crop, Forage and Turfgrass Management</td>
<td>6912</td>
<td>9391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Environmental Quality</td>
<td>482973</td>
<td>673892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Plant Registrations</td>
<td>40339</td>
<td>41327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences Education</td>
<td>18547</td>
<td>17929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil Science Society of America Journal</td>
<td>715569</td>
<td>1052772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Plant Genome</td>
<td>114542</td>
<td>52309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Agriculture</td>
<td>1311</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vadose Zone Journal</td>
<td>123594</td>
<td>145757</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Impact Factor
We will apply for inclusion in the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE) after three years, after consulting with Clarivate Analytics (formerly the IP & Science business of Thomson Reuters). I have applied for inclusion in their Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), a precursor to being considered for inclusion in SCIE. Impact factors are given annually for journals indexed in SCIE.
New Items
As of late 2016, authors may choose between two open access licensing options:
• CC BY https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/ (In summary: You may share immediately with attribution.)
• CC BY-NC-ND https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/ (In summary: You may share immediately with attribution, but not for commercial or derivative purposes.)
Some institutions and funding agencies require the CC BY license. A website and web ad in the Digital Library were created to educate readers and authors about the OA options: https://dl.sciencesocieties.org/open-access

ACSESS will launch an English language editing service in late 2017. The service will be two tiered and will serve authors that need help with formatting or English language. Each tier will carry a fee. Authors will need to opt-in to the service. The use of the service does not guarantee acceptance.

By fall 2018, ACSESS publications will require corresponding authors to have an OrcID to submit a paper. An OrcID is an identifier linked to a specific author. It remains the same when the author changes employers or research topics and can distinguish those with a common name. You can learn more or register for an OrcID here: https://orcid.org/.

Later this year, we will be introducing Dryad (a data repository) as a long-term storage option for large datasets associated with published dataset articles. This option will only be available for published articles. If there is future demand, we may evaluate Dryad for use during peer review as well.

We have worked with Google to improve the digital library’s rankings for article title searches.

The Digital Library will get a new look in 2018, with some added features and better navigation.

Social Media and Promotion
See separate report for magazine promotion in 2017.

Journal content was also promoted to the general public through our science communication department as web stories. Questions regarding these stories can be directed to A&EL editor Warren Dick, who currently acts as A&EL’s science communications editor, or Susan Fisk, Public & Science Communication Director (sfisk@sciencesocieties.org).

A&EL’s Twitter account, @AgricEnvLetters, now has more than 280 followers, compared with 140 this time last year.

Sales and Marketing
In 2017, Tricia Newell, who is in charge of all sales and marketing of the Digital Library and publications, continues to attend international meetings to promote JEQ and the ACSESS Digital Library (DL). There is still a commitment in marketing Society publications to Universities, Consortia, and Corporations that specialize in Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Haley Salazar is a new addition to ACSESS as the Publications Marketing Specialist. She assists Tricia with the marketing of the DL and publications. Tricia continues to travel to conferences where a high concentration of Special Librarians and Research Library staff are in attendance, while Haley travels to conferences that are more researcher-facing to solicit manuscript submissions. A stronger focus on promoting publishing with the Societies is being implemented as many of our authors have open access mandates and we publish more completely OA titles. There continues to be discussions about adding content from related societies and publishers who have related journals to the DL. New content added for 2017–2018 includes The Plant Phenome Journal and Meat & Muscle Biology from the American Meat Science Association.

Headquarters Staff
Contacts: Ann Edahl, managing editor (aedahl@sciencesocieties.org), Bill Cook, director of publications (bcook@sciencesocieties.org), Abby Morrison, editorial assistant (amorrison@sciencesocieties.org), Lauren Van Driel, submissions manager (lvandriel@sciencesocieties.org), Tricia Newell (tnewell@sciencesocieties.org), publications marketing coordinator.
Acknowledgments

Many thanks to A&EL editor Warren Dick and to our technical editors, associate editors, and reviewers for all of your hard work and dedication to A&EL.

—Ann Edahl, Managing Editor, Agricultural & Environmental Letters

Director of Publications Report—Bill Cook

Publications Update—Continuing Innovation in the Publications Area for 2017

- Digital Library: We continue to add content to the Digital Library, both books and journals. Our agents are working to upsell subscriptions from single titles to the journal package and from the journal package to the Digital Library.
- ASAS has contracted with Oxford University Press (OUP) to be the publisher of their journals and magazine effective January 1, 2018. We are working with ASAS and OUP on the transition. Journals that are affected are Journal of Animal Science, Translation Animal Science, and the magazine Animal Frontiers. These will no longer be hosted in the Digital Library as of Jan. 1, 2018.
- Through September 2017, there have been over 3.5M journal article and book chapter downloads. That compares to 2.7M through October of 2016.
- We had a very successful Editors’ Conference in Madison where we had a presentation from the Center for Open Science and discussions included an update on Impact Factor and the potential for new journals. The next conference will be in 2018, also in Madison. We are working on the launch of an English-language editing service, which we expect will be available either at the Annual Meeting or soon after.
- We now have representatives across the globe working on our behalf to retain and upgrade existing customers and to identify, train and sell to new customers. Our agents in Asia have begun to add subscriptions in areas we haven’t seen before and we are beginning to see the same in Europe and South America in 2017 as those agents enter their second selling cycle. We manage the North American sales internally.
- We partnered with the American Meat Science Association to launch a new journal Meat and Muscle Biology, to be launched in October 2016. This extends our reach into animal and meat science and will increase visits to the Digital Library. The journal is Open Access.
- The Plant Phenome Journal: We launched our newest title in January, an Open Access title. Our first article was published on September of this year.
- Advertising: We continue to see a decline in advertising in the magazines. This is consistent with the general trend in hard copy advertising, but we aren’t getting replacement electronic advertising. We are working with our current agent to see if we can increase in either medium.
- Books: The books program continues to publish books developed by the joint ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Book Committee. Staff reviewed printing options last year, evaluating our print-on-demand (POD) program and options for outsourcing printing on a royalty basis, and will maintain the POD workflow for now. A new online store launched in 2017.
- Data Sets: We began accepting a new manuscript type in 2015—data set papers. ACSESS will assign DOIs to the datasets, ensuring that they include the necessary metadata to aid in discovery, and store them in the digital library, or an alternate repository for large sets, for long-term preservation. We entered into an agreement with Dryad to make depositing of data sets smooth and to let authors know there is a home for the data sets. Author guidelines and guidelines for reviewers of data papers and the linked datasets are available.