

The Culture and Ethos of Palynology

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EDITORIAL

The culture and ethos of *Palynology*

At the *Palynology* website (<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/tpal20/current>), you will find *Instructions for Authors* and lots of other information about the journal such as the latest papers, the past volumes, the Editorial Board and the current Impact Factor. However, websites can only realistically go so far, so here I will attempt to explain more about the culture and ethos behind this journal.

Palynology is, as I am sure all readers will be aware, the serial journal of AASP – The Palynological Society (AASP – TPS). It was established in 1977 and AASP – TPS teamed up with Taylor and Francis in 2009, with the latter undertaking all the production and distribution. The first volume produced by Taylor and Francis was number 34 in 2010. *Palynology* is fully owned by AASP – TPS, and we, as an association, have complete editorial control. The two organisations are, plainly, very different entities. The Taylor and Francis Group is a multinational concern and is part of Informa plc. It publishes over 2,700 journals across all academic sectors worldwide. *Palynology* is produced from the Taylor and Francis office at Milton Park, just outside Oxford, UK. Taylor and Francis have an international infrastructure to promote and sell articles and volumes. This benefits AASP – TPS because we receive royalties on all sales made. The commercial activities of Taylor and Francis do not impinge whatsoever on the non-profit ethos of AASP – TPS. As it was prior to 2010, if you are a member of the society, you receive *Palynology* and can choose between getting access online only or online and print. It is hopefully very clear that this partnership is a truly symbiotic one.

So what does *Palynology*, the journal, aspire to? Obviously, AASP – TPS and Taylor and Francis would like it to be regarded as the premier outlet for scholarly works on all aspects of organic microfossils and their modern counterparts. We hope to be able to offer our readers a wide range of high quality research articles. The journal will accept manuscripts on palaeobotany, which is of course much more than just a sister discipline to palynology. Moreover, we will take articles on the history of our subject and suitable memorials/obituaries. Both short and long manuscripts are welcome. We also have the option to include supplements to a volume in order to accommodate particularly long manuscripts.

We are fully aware that there are many specialist journals that will take manuscripts on palynology. What makes *Palynology* stand out? In my view, where we can be different is having what might be termed 'the personal touch'. Giving authors the option to include a brief biography and a photograph of themselves is only a small part of this culture and ethos. If you submit a manuscript to a journal owned outright by a major multinational publisher, as an author you frequently feel as if you are dealing with robots.

Overwhelmingly, the emails you receive are all fully automated, and often it is only the name of the corresponding author and the manuscript title that gets into the template! The personal touch is noticeable by its complete absence. By contrast, we try to insert a paragraph or so of remarks from ourselves specifically to all authors and reviewers in the boilerplate emails.

The team of editors of *Palynology*, Encarni Montoya, Matthew Pound and myself, will always respond to pre-submission questions from authors. We aim to interact closely with our authors, and we always treat them as valued clients. The editorial team will try to help with any questions you may have about the online submission process, but we can refer you on to the Taylor and Francis helpdesk for this if necessary. In our view our online submission procedure is one of the best and most user-friendly around. More specifically, we feed back any editor's comments on manuscripts to the corresponding author upon submission. Furthermore, we try to ensure that manuscripts are reviewed expeditiously. Provided reviewers send in their feedback to us quickly, we aim to give authors a decision within one month (sooner if possible). On the topic of reviewers, you will understand that we cannot always guarantee to use your recommended referees. However we do undertake to respect authors wishes if they wish us not to use a particular specialist, unless truly exceptional circumstances pertain. Naturally we are driven by maintaining the scientific excellence of *Palynology*, but we always aim to be positive in the decision-making process. We do decline some manuscripts, but this is very much seen as a last resort, and we always provide feedback that hopefully will help the authors get their work published by us or elsewhere.

Our partnership with Taylor and Francis allows us to achieve very rapid publication once a paper has been accepted. Immediately an accepted manuscript is received by the production team, it is given a doi (digital object identifier) number. After a few days, the original (untypeset) manuscript is published online and can be cited. Therefore the date of publication is the date the accepted manuscript goes online. Of course, this can be a different year to when the article is assigned to a volume and given a page range (Riding et al. 2019). Following the formal acceptance of a paper, behind the scenes, the production process has begun. Taylor and Francis have all papers copyedited by their team of professionals and then the manuscript is typeset. Authors normally see their proofs in three to four weeks. The editorial team also check the proofs to ensure consistency and that no glitches get through.

Palynology works to an annual page budget and currently this is 773. Hence each of our quarterly parts will normally run to around 194 pages. This scenario means that we have

to always have a healthy backlog (an unfortunate term!) of papers which are published online but not yet assigned to a volume. Thus a balance has to be struck. We do not want to be short of pages to assign to a specific part and, by contrast, we do not want a backlog which exceeds the annual page budget. Authors should be assured that the backlog is constantly monitored, and we aim to ensure that your article will not have to wait more than a few months before it is assigned to a volume. If the backlog gets too large, then we would engage with Taylor and Francis to increase the annual page budget provided this is sustainable in the long term.

We hope that this short editorial piece is informative. *Palynology* is a journal for palynologists run by palynologists. Since we partnered up with Taylor and Francis in 2009, the journal has grown substantially, hopefully in an organic way. Between 1977 and 2008 we only produced one issue per year. In 2009 this was doubled and now we have four issues per year. Our current (2019) Impact Factor is 1.330 and the overall trend of this key metric is steadily upwards. It would seem that our treatment of authors as valued clients is paying off. Encarni, Matthew and myself are very approachable;

we would welcome any feedback about *Palynology* and are receptive to any new ideas you may have.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Reference

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