

WORDS FROM THE EDITOR—The journal **Amphibian and Reptile Conservation** (ARC) has made many advances since our last published issue. A quick glance at this issue verifies again our continued commitment and resolve to publish a journal of the highest standards devoted exclusively to the conservation of amphibians and reptiles worldwide. To review let me elaborate further.

The journal is now open access. This means anyone with an Internet connection and web browser can access the contents of the journal free-of-charge with absolutely no restrictions and/or registration. Go to the PubMed Central website at <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/>, review the list of journals, and click on **Amphibian and Reptile Conservation**. The journal can be retrieved as either exact reproduction of the actual journal pages (PDF) and/or as HTML files. All the original photographs, tables, graphs, etc. are available online for all the world to read, use, and exchange. The journal is also permanently archived (online) by PubMed Central at the National Library of Medicine (NLM, the world's largest medical library) under the auspices of the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI).

ARC does not charge any fees whatsoever for an author(s) to publish in the journal. Authors publishing in the journal also retain full copyright to all their material. Furthermore, the journal will always be available in hard copy (printed edition) for those who prefer to read it in this format.

I feel it very important to elaborate on the importance of open access publishing. In a perfect world, all journals (and literature) would be open access. To advance scientific study and further the benefit to human health, and especially environmental conservation (Fonseca and Benson 2003), it is imperative for organizations, societies, and publishers to advance the open access model for scientific publication. In a recent 194-page report of the STM (Science, Technical, and Medical) journal industry by Sami Kassab financial analysts at BNP Paribas (<http://www.bnpparibas.com/en/home/default.asp>), it warned about the impact of changes in the scientific publishing industry (BioMed Central 2003a). It was estimated in the report that the global scientific research community could save more than 40% in costs by switching entirely to an open access model.

Societies should continue to increase organizational functions and offer an ever-increasing number of member benefits separate and therefore outside of the publication(s) aspect. In this way, being a society member is a valued benefit separate from receiving the publication(s). At the very least, members should be able to access the societies publications full-text online from home. I am a member of several scientific societies but cannot access their content online from home; academic libraries are where I need to go now for online access.

Another added benefit for publications online is their inherent ability to link to the full-text of other publications and websites. This is a must in the electronic age we are heading into full force (CrossRef [[www.crossref.org](http://www.crossref.org)] and PubMed Central [[www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov](http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov)]). For example, reading the most recent articles from ARC one directly links to *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, AmphibiaWeb, and other articles, abstracts, and important resources indexed and linked to the PubMed database. Other important areas in an open access environment also become a reality such as data mining and the use of the Digital Object Identifier (DOI) [DeRisi, et al. 2003].

I support science and scientific societies, which advance our knowledge of life on earth and all of scientific study in general. I am especially partial to the Herpetologists' League and *Herpetologica*, for it was the first science journal in the field of herpetology I was exposed to. I remember riding my modest Stingray bicycle 10 or 12 miles one-way just to see the only library in my area that had a subscription to *Herpetologica*! In the electronic age, which is upon us and growing greater everyday, this type of effort is very impractical. It is especially important for people in developing countries to have good information available online for this is where the most urgent conservation work is being conducted (BioMed Central 2003b).

The future is ready to explode further into the Information Age caused primarily by the Internet and is thus literally changing the landscape of scientific publishing (Doyle, et al. 2003). It is in the best interest of science and the public to make the necessary steps toward the noble goal of open access of knowledge (online) surely to advance society and surpass any of our wildest dreams. The solutions to global warming, species extinctions, developmental malformations as seen for example in some amphibian species, will offer humankind unimagined advancements in every field due to the uninhibited exchange of information online. The brave, noble, and solution solvers now and in the future will remain at the forefront of this exciting human endeavor called open access.—*Craig Hassapakis*

## References

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