

Editorial

Farewell to PGR

Writing a farewell before actually taking off one's boots feels strange. As I write this, the northern autumn (fall) has hardly begun, but by the time you read it, the trees will all be bare.

Plant Genetic Resources: Characterization and Utilization (PGR:CEU) was born from the ashes of the NIAB journal *Plants, Varieties and Seeds* in 2003. In deciding to relaunch the journal, NIAB was knowingly taking a risk, not just a reputational one but a financial one as well. It recognized there was a need to provide a substantial financial cushion at the beginning (for which my thanks!), and my hope is that that investment will continue to pay dividends (as it is already doing) well into the future. Since the outset, we have produced three issues a year unflinchingly on time, initially published by CAB but since 2007 by Cambridge University Press (CUP). So a further duty must be to acknowledge both these organizations for their support, especially during the early, leaner years when we were seeking to establish the journal in an ever-more crowded market. While I am still in thank-you mode, I must not fail to tip my metaphorical hat to our administrator Faye, who since yesterday has no longer been officially associated with the journal; she has performed her role since 2008 with exemplary efficiency, as many of our contributing authors, reviewers and Editorial Board members, not to mention the production staff at CUP, will, and have attested to. Finally, my appreciation goes to the members of the Editorial Board who have given the journal the credibility it needed and have helped me in numerous ways over the years.

In my preface to the first ever issue of *PGR:CEU*, I made a somewhat whimsical connection between plant genetic resources and non-stick frying pans, which greatly amused the then manager of the journal. The point was that big science projects have a propensity to generate quite unexpected spin-offs (one of the moon-landing programmes was Teflon), so the question was what unintended benefits might the Human Genome Project create for the plant genetic resources community. Back in 2003, I wrote that genomics technologies were delivering 'a quantum leap in our ability to conceptualize, annotate, analyse and understand the genetic make-up of the

organisms that are so important to our well-being'. Much of the genomics content in our early output seems pedestrian today in a genetics world where markers are counted in their tens of thousands and the cost of DNA sequencing continues to head south. For some years now indeed, our policy has been to exclude research based on the RAPD technique, and my guess is that over the coming years, the same fate will await a number of other early-generation genotyping platforms.

They say that a week in politics is a long time, so imagine 12 years as editor! The journal has published more than 35 issues since its inception, equivalent to around 400 articles, maybe one and half million words. This represents a lot of reading. The last 12 months have seen major changes in the way the journal has chosen to both operate and be published. Printed copy is now a thing of the past, and a fully online manuscript submission system has recently been set in place. I took these major changes as a signal that the time had arrived to pass on the baton, and I am sure that with Theo in charge from 2015, it will be in the safest of hands. It is particularly pleasing to be leaving on such a high note: our submission rate is higher than ever (currently around 200 manuscripts per year), and our impact factor has leapt 50% from its initial figure in 2013, having already exceeded my first target of 1. Over to you Theo!

So I take this opportunity to bid you, the readership, farewell. My final sentence back in 2003 was '*PGR:CEU* is a "good thing". Let us work together to make it live up to its sobriquet.' I know that its first 12 years have been consistent with this rallying cry and I am confident that its next 12 will see it growing in strength. To my successor and to the journal as a whole, I offer this quote of perhaps the leading orator of our time Barack Obama 'The future rewards those who press on', and on my behalf, to misquote him just slightly 'That's the good thing about being editor, I can do whatever I want'. So I'm leaving! Best to you all.

Robert Koebner,
Chief Editor
Norwich, October 2014.