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Phytotaxa 100: The rise of a major journal in systematic and taxonomic botany

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Today, the 23rd of May, is the 305th birthday of Carl Linnaeus—father of plant taxonomy and founder of the modern scheme of binomial nomenclature. To join international celebrations of his birthday, we publish *Phytotaxa* 100, at the same time marking an important milestone in the history of this journal of botanical taxonomy. It is timely that we review its development in the past, especially against the objectives that we set for *Phytotaxa* (Christenhusz *et al.* 2009, 2011a), and to assess its current position among journals of systematic botany.

Growth and performance

Based on the successful model of *Zootaxa* (Zhang 2008), *Phytotaxa* began its journey on 28 October 2009, with the aim to accelerate the description of plant, algal and fungal biodiversity and to enhance the availability and accessibility of descriptive taxonomic papers (Christenhusz *et al.* 2009). The number of volumes increased steadily over the last four years (Fig. 1), with one volume every other month in 2009, one volume every month in 2010, two volumes every month in 2011 and over three volumes every month in 2012. During the last four months in 2013, an average of 5.5 volumes per month was published. The number of published papers increased at a faster rate (Fig. 1): from fewer than 20 papers in 2009 to over 200 papers in 2012. The rate of increase in terms of the number of papers jumped after 2011; this is probably due to the fact that *Phytotaxa* had gained the visibility, acceptance and respect in the taxonomic community as we hoped (Christenhusz *et al.* 2011a). Another important factor is that *Phytotaxa* was accepted and indexed by Science Citation Index Expanded (Esser & Zhang 2012) because most authors preferred to publish in SCIE-indexed journals. According to data indexed in SCIE (as of 15 May 2013), *Phytotaxa* has published over 500 papers for 937 authors from 69 countries, with the top 10 countries being USA (133 papers), Brazil 105 papers), UK (83 papers), China (45 papers), Norway (41 papers), Germany (40 papers), Finland (36 papers), India (24 papers), Czech Republic (20 papers) and Mexico (19 papers).

One of the primary objectives of *Phytotaxa* is to speed up the publication of taxonomic papers (Christenhusz *et al.* 2009). During 2009 and 2010, delay in publication after acceptance was on average 50 days (Christenhusz *et al.* 2011a); in 2012, this was reduced to 13 days on average; the fastest papers were published one day after acceptance (Cicuzza & Kessler 2012, Deng & Huang 2012, Doucette 2012, Gouda & Fernández 2012, Karger *et al.* 2012, Moon 2012, Turner 2012, Zhang 2012). This increased speed of publication was possible because of the novel set-up and structures of *Phytotaxa* allowing for easy e-publication, especially after the new *International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants (Melbourne Code)* allowed for electronic-only publication of botanical names from 1 January 2012 (ICN, McNeill *et al.* 2012; see also Knapp *et al.* 2011). *Phytotaxa* became the first journal to embrace e-publication of new taxa (Esser & Zhang 2012), with five articles describing a new diatom (Bahls, 2012), four species and three genera of algae (Novis & Visnovski, 2012) and two new vascular plant species (Grings & Boldrini, 2012).

Another primary objective of *Phytotaxa* is to facilitate the descriptions of new taxa/names (Christenhusz *et al.* 2009). *Phytotaxa* certainly had made significant contributions: 27 new taxa (names) in 2009, 60 in 2010; 385 in 2011[1] and 257 in 2012. In addition to new taxa, *Phytotaxa* embraced the APG III system (APG 2009, Christenhusz *et al.* 2011b) and published a linear sequence and bibliography expanding APG to include all vascular plants (Christenhusz *et al.* 2011c, 2011d, Reveal & Chase 2011), systems that are now being adopted as the standard for classification of ferns

1. Based on counts reported in Christenhusz & Zhang (2011); the large number of new taxa this year was strongly affected by a monograph describing one hundred new species of lichenized fungi (Lumbsch *et al.* 2011), the type of papers *Phytotaxa* encourages. New combinations are not counted as new names in this paper.

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and gymnosperms. *Phytotaxa* also published one of the two plants listed in the 'top 10 new species 2012' compiled annually by the International Institute for Species Exploration (http://species.asu.edu/Top10)— *Meconopsis autumnalis* Egan, 2011. Editors and authors are strongly encouraged to submit their new species to this panel. It broadens the profile of the journal and shows the world that many interesting species are yet to be discovered.

Phytotaxa encourages open access of taxonomic literature to increase the accessibility of descriptive taxonomic papers (Christenhusz *et al*. 2009) and managed to publish about 38% of the papers (Fig. 1) and also pages (Fig. 2) for free access during 2009 to 2012.

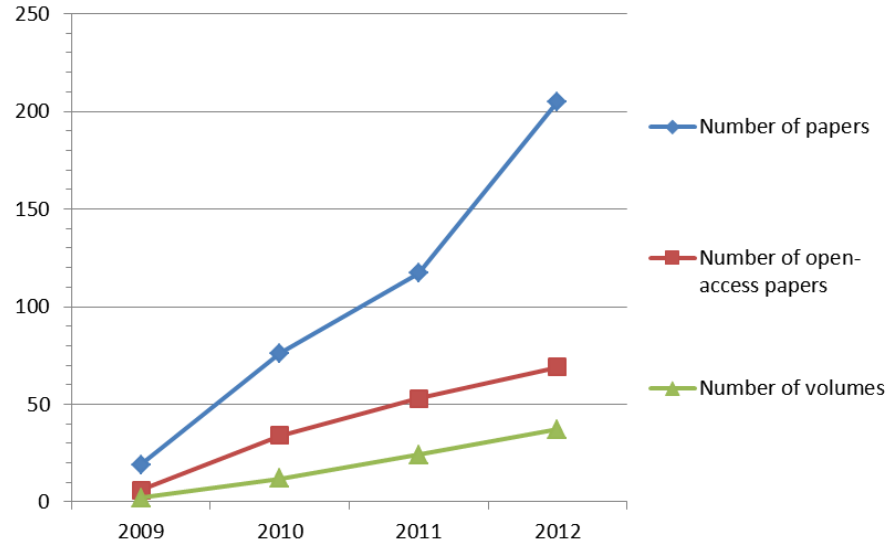

FIGURE 1. Growth of *Phytotaxa* in terms of numbers of volumes and papers (including open access papers) published during 2009 and 2012.

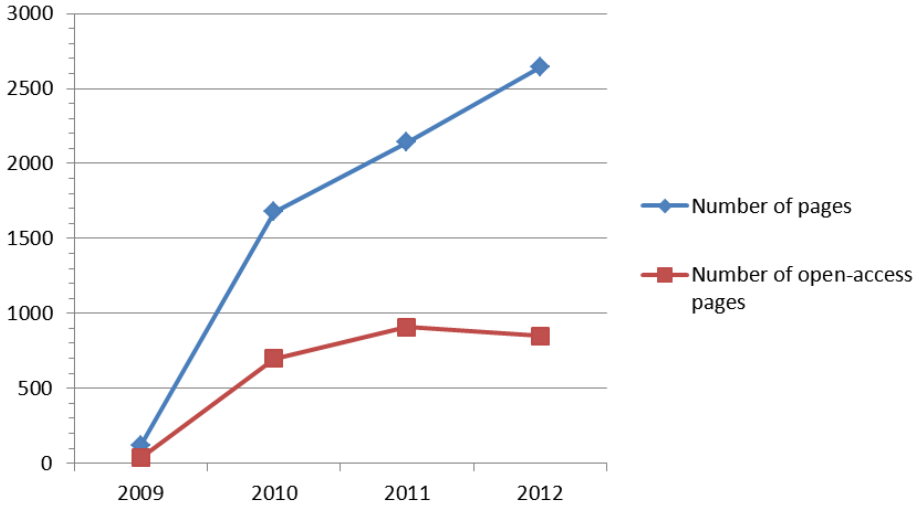

FIGURE 2. Growth of *Phytotaxa* in terms of numbers of pages (including open access pages) published during 2009 and 2012.

Position among journals of systematic botany

The most recent edition of *Journal Citation Reports* released in June 2012 showed that *Phytotaxa* was the third among the top 10 systematic botany journals based on impact factor (Table 1). Its impact factor (1.797) was very close to what was estimated by Esser and Zhang (2012) in February 2012: "1.6 or slightly higher". Among these high-ranking journals *Phytotaxa* certainly allows for the fastest publication, and the top journal—*Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society*—no longer publishes new species accounts and is therefore not comparable to *Phytotaxa*.

TABLE 1. Top 10 journals of systematic botany based on impact factors according to *Journal Citation Reports* released in June 2012.

2.821	*Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society*
2.703	*Taxon*
1.797	*Phytotaxa*
1.639	*Flora*
1.596	*Journal of Systematics and Evolution*
1.517	*Systematic Botany*
1.418	*Plant Biosystematics*
1.335	*Plant Systematics and Evolution*
1.034	*Australian Systematic Botany*
0.195	*Novon*

The total number of recent papers (2011–2013) indexed by the Web of Science was higher in *Phytotaxa* than *Taxon*, although in 2011 there were more indexed papers of *Taxon* than of *Phytotaxa* (Fig. 4). Likewise, there are now more citations to *Phytotaxa* papers published in 2012–2013 than to those published in *Taxon* during the same period (Fig. 4). These data all show the rapid rise of a major journal in systematic botany—a tribute to the hard work of all the editors, reviewers and authors who supported *Phytotaxa* during the last three and half years.

Important changes in 2013

From the first volume in 2013, all *Phytotaxa* papers are assigned DOIs and archived simutaneously in PDF/A[2] on Biotaxa.org—an online library for taxonomic journals; papers published on the same day are grouped into an issue. Hajo Esser stepped down from his role as Chief Editor in February 2013, because it became impossible for a single Chief Editor to handle the increasing number of manuscripts. The journal is now edited by a large team of subject editors, resulting in a more variable quality of editing, but certainly speeding up the publication process. An online manuscript submission and tracking system hosted on Biotaxa.org is now operational, although not all manuscripts are yet handled that way. The implementation of this will also speed up the process by allowing reminders to be sent directly to authors, editors and reviewers. By this celebratory editorial we hope to encourage the reviewers and editors to continue their invaluable task to voluntarily spend their time making *Phytotaxa* a success, and encourage authors to continue to submit articles describing the wonders of our blue and green planet.

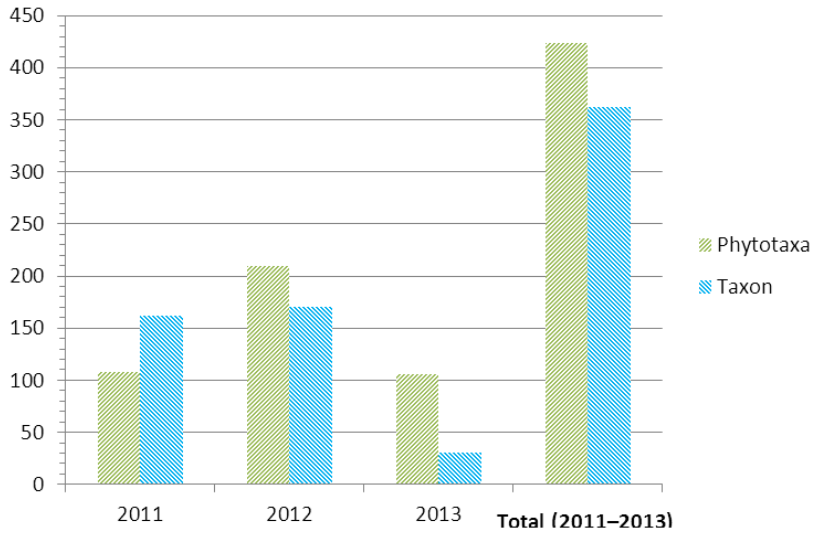

FIGURE 3. *Phytotaxa* versus *Taxon* in recent years: numbers of papers indexed in Science Citation Index Expanded during 2011 and 2013 (data as of 15 May 2013 from Web of Science).

2. DOI is Digital Object Identifer. PDF/A is an ISO-standardized version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) specialized for the digital preservation of electronic documents. Phytotaxa files were converted to PDF/A-1b.

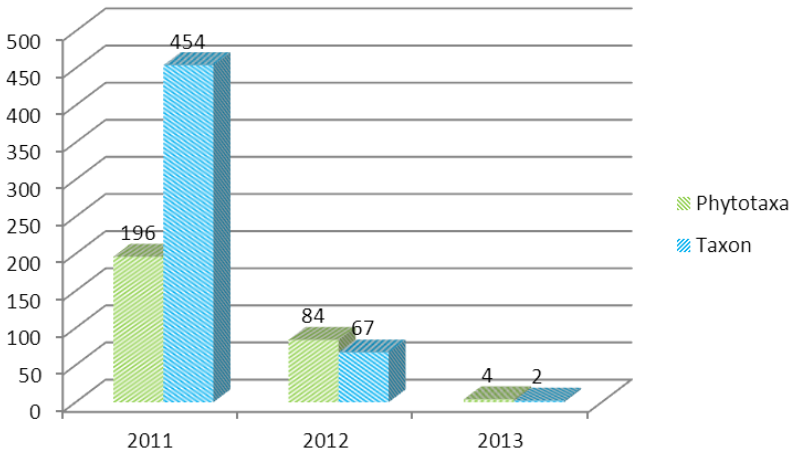

FIGURE 4. *Phytotaxa* versus *Taxon* in recent years: numbers of total SCIE citations to papers published in 2011, 2012 and 2013 (data as of 15 May 2013 from Web of Science).

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