Editorial Comment

New Publisher, Special Issue of Systematic Biology, and Introduction of Editor-Elect

This issue is marked by three distinctive events. First, it is the first to appear under an agreement in which Taylor & Francis will publish the journal on behalf of the Society. Previously, Systematic Biology was “self-published” and Allen Press was the typesetter and printer. Under the new arrangement, the Society retains editorial control, and Taylor & Francis will not only publish and actively market Systematic Biology, but will also handle business matters such as memberships, subscriptions, and back issues. In addition, the publisher will provide 50 free reprints to the senior author, as well as online access to journal articles for members; there are no page charges and no increase in membership dues. The Society will benefit in many other ways from this agreement, and we look forward to a productive alliance with Taylor & Francis. On behalf of the membership, I would extend deepest thanks to Paula Mabee, who initiated this project during her presidency and carefully but relentlessly nurtured it to fruition through many days of effort. The Society owes her much for her service.

This issue also contains a series of papers on the subject of taxonomic sampling, an emerging issue as phylogenetic data sets become larger. Serendipity motivated this assemblage of these papers. Most were submitted independently to Systematic Biology, and two of them (by Hillis and Soltis et al.) were part of a symposium on large data sets organized by Doug Soltis and Pam Soltis for the SSB/SSE meetings at the University of Colorado at Boulder. The papers by Poe and Kim were also presented at that meeting, and at my invitation David Hillis expanded his presentation into an overview. My role was simply to get the manuscripts into the same issue.

The third event of this issue is the introduction of Richard Olmstead of the University of Washington in Seattle, who was elected as the 15th editor of Systematic Biology. In addition to his expertise in empirical and theoretical systematics, Dick is the first botanist to hold that office, and thus adds a very long branch to the tree of editors. He is no stranger, having served the Society as an associate editor. I continue as editor through 1998 and will see through to publication all papers submitted in 1997. Any new manuscripts submitted after 1 January 1998 should be sent to Dick at the address on the inside front cover.

Lastly, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the associate editors, members of the Editorial Board (these persons are listed on the inside front cover), and the book review editor, David Hillis, for their support of the journal. I also extend my thanks to the many reviewers for their prompt responses; their efforts ensure continued quality of the journal. The editorial staff has been unflagging. Kimberlee Wollter has served as Managing Editor under the last three editors, providing stability and expertise, especially during editorial transitions. Lori Bockstanz, as editorial assistant, has faithfully maintained the ebb and flow of manuscripts in the editorial office. The contribution of all these leaves no one to blame but myself when things go wrong. I am grateful for having had the opportunity, by my service, to promote systematics. As someone remarked during a Council meeting, “The journal is the most important thing we do.”—David Cannatella, Editor.

I am excited by the prospect of being the next editor of Systematic Biology and at the same time a bit anxious about being the first botanist to take over that responsibil-
ity. I am in awe of the journal’s reputation and the excellent work of editors who have come before me in helping to establish and maintain that reputation. I look forward to the support and encouragement from you, the members of the Society of Systematic Biologists and readers of Systematic Biology, as well as to your suggestions and ideas for how this journal can keep pace with the forefront of the field of systematics in a time when more and more journals are devoted to systematics or are publishing papers of systematic interest. Please submit your suggestions and your manuscripts directly to me at the address inside the front cover of the journal.

My first priority as editor will be to maintain the high quality of papers readers of Systematic Biology have come to expect. After that, my goals will be to (1) increase the diversity of taxonomic groups represented in the pages of the journal, (2) solicit timely reviews of important subjects in systematics from leaders in our field, and (3) reduce the handling time for manuscripts in the editorial process. With this last point in mind, I remind you all that Systematic Biology is owned by SSB and edited with the volunteer labor of its members, and I encourage you all to be timely with your reviews when asked to contribute and to be patient with us when your manuscripts are in our hands. Our editorial responsibility is more than to pass judgment on whether a manuscript meets standards for publication in Systematic Biology, but to work with the authors to achieve the best possible finished product for each manuscript we publish.

I will continue with the editorial structure developed by the past two editors, making use of a slate of associate editors and an Editorial Board, along with ad hoc reviewers, designed to include a diversity of expertise and to maintain consistency in the review process. At the same time, we will be smoothing out the details of the arrangement with our new publishers at Taylor & Francis.

I encourage each of you to contact me with any questions or suggestions regarding Systematic Biology and to contact your colleagues, who may otherwise not do so, to consider Systematic Biology for their manuscripts on subjects of interest to systematists of all stripes.—Richard Olmstead, Editor-Elect.