

## Changes, Challenges and Opportunities

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With this issue begins another chapter in the life of the *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* (JAGEE). In June of this year, Professor Richard P. Haynes notified Springer Publishers that he wished to step aside as Editor in Chief of JAGEE, and that he requested that I take on that role. Springer asked me, and with some trepidation, I agreed to serve as interim Editor in Chief at least through the remainder of 2013.

As a first (published) official order of business, I would like to extend sincere thanks to Dr. Haynes, on behalf of the entire global agricultural and environmental ethics community, for his commitment and service to the journal and to the community. About 20 years ago, Richard took the reins from founding editors Hugh Lehman and Frank Hurnik, and never missed a beat. JAGEE has remained the pre-eminent publication outlet for scholars and practitioners of what we loosely refer to as “agricultural ethics,” in large measure because of Richard’s attention to detail, his personal engagement with authors, and his care for the journal and the profession. Again, we give a heartfelt thank you to Professor Richard P. Haynes, Editor in Chief *Emeritus* for JAGEE.

Now that I am interim EiC (as the people at Springer in the Netherlands refer to me), I would like to make a few changes in how business is conducted. First, I will stop the practice of using the “From the Editor” page or pages at the front of the journal to summarize the papers in a given issue. People who subscribe to, regularly read at a library, or just pick up a copy, are capable of reading a Table of Contents (ToC in Springerspeak), perusing the abstracts of articles that catch their interest, and deciding which articles they will commit the time to read and study. In fact, there will be print issues with no “From the Editor” pages written by me at all. This will especially be true for special issues which have a “Special Issue Editor” whose job it will be to introduce the topics or themes of the special issue.

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Another change I want to introduce is occasionally to include “reflections” articles. I anticipate these to be something like intellectual “memoirs” from senior scholars or practitioners, or “philosophical” discussions of the intellectual history of an individual or institution. These may also include short pieces from individuals with a particularly poignant story to tell of an experience, a newfound insight, a revelation. These “reflections” articles will of course undergo the same rigorous review process that JAGEE and Springer are known for. I invite submissions or proposals from all of you readers for these types of articles.

Speaking of reviews, one of the major challenges I face(d) as EiC is that of finding a suitable number of able reviewers for manuscripts submitted. For those of you who do not know, Springer uses an online system called “Editorial Manager (EM).” It is into the EM portal that authors upload papers online, and it is through EM that the EiC identifies and invites reviewers for papers. EM also sends the letters of invitation to review papers. My experience with the latter function has been challenging, even frustrating, as I invite reviewers whom I think are appropriate for a given paper, only to have them decline or ignore the invitation. We are making every effort to stay on schedule and return comments/decisions to authors in a timely fashion, but reviewers who ignore my invitation burden not only the editorial staff, but authors. Admittedly, my first months were the end of the summer, when many academics wander away from this kind of work to do other things—or just relax and prepare for the upcoming school year. Still, I have a request: for those of you who are in the EM reviewer pool, I will try to not burden you with many manuscripts. However, if you decline to review a paper—for whatever reason—please suggest an alternate. Although I believe I know or know of most of the people in the EM system as reviewers, I do not know everybody, and will sometimes send a manuscript to someone who has no interest or expertise in the manuscript’s field or topic. I apologize in advance for that. That said, I invite anyone who is not a registered reviewer in EM to send me an email at burk@ufl.edu and I will register you. A larger pool means fewer manuscripts for any given reviewer and a timely decision for authors.

We have the opportunity to make JAGEE even better than it has been. I have always been impressed, even awed, by the quality, and as importantly, the diversity of the contributions to this journal. As you will note even from just this issue, “agricultural ethics” attracts quality scholarship from anthropology to zoology and everything in between. Please encourage your contacts and colleagues from across the disciplines to consider JAGEE as a publication outlet for their work. This interdisciplinarity enriches JAGEE and is valuable for our subscribers and readers. On this point one cautionary note, though: during my (however brief) tenure as EiC I will hang tough on JAGEE’s mission to publish works that deal with ETHICS. Those of you who know me or my work know that I am fairly broad in my understanding of what counts as applied ethics in agricultural and environmental contexts. But I want to reaffirm that under my watch, JAGEE will continue to publish work that has a clear *normative* purpose, element, or implication. Purely scientific papers (or social scientific papers without normative content), and those rejected from strictly disciplinary journals need not apply.

One final note. Many of you know that when JAGEE accepts a paper for publication, after the normal typesetting/formatting process, the article is immediately published online. These articles “count” as published. Regarding print copy, Springer has a “first in/first out” (FIFO) policy: articles are sequenced for hard copy publication in the order they had been accepted. Richard chose to sidestep FIFO on occasions for the sake of a theme he wished a particular issue to develop. Apart from “Special Issues” which will usually have a Special Issue Editor, I believe that FIFO is the fairest way to treat authors and will proceed accordingly.

I hope you enjoy and learn from this and subsequent issues of the *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*.