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Editorial Open Access

Enabling Learning and Enhancing Education in IPM in the Midst of Dwindling Financial Resources: Why Open Access to Resources and Publishing Could be a Strategic Step to Support Students Today and Tomorrow?

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Introduction

When I was invited to join the Editorial Board of the journal Entomology, Ornithology and Herpetology (EOH), I read carefully the note coming with the invitation and also looked at the content and scope. Then two things came into my mind as I stopped a few minutes to reflect on a couple of issues: 1) how the new journal links and is relevant to Integrated Pest Management –IPM (for those who understand its definition); and the second one is the issue of open access and relevance in the current situation of an ailing global economy, particularly in the vulnerable developing nations.

In the latter, more than ever, high education is of prime importance, yet, looking at the current world trends showing a higher number of trained scientists per million peple in developed countries (UNDP Human Development Report), the developing nations in many instances trail, although many are making progress. It is now well documented that the issue of open access is here to remain for years to come, and this is even more fueled by the recent and ongoing disruption of the global economic stability.

While having learned and practiced the principles and applications of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), are we still faced with either its narrow or broader definition? What are the implications of the birth and growth of EOH, and how the journal can play a critical role in addressing gaps in information availability and cost in a global ailing or recovering economy? How would this play for students with limited resources, yet with a strong desire to excel and get quality training and education?

IPM and Entomology, Ornithology & Herpetology Journal

Although it is meant for IPM to be an integrated tool in addressing pests, diseases and in general unwanted organisms considered a nuisance to humans and systems, often, IPM is associated with entomologists. Once we talk about IPM, we think of Entomologists before later going back to its definition to understand its meaning and scope. Apart from using integrated tools and techniques to control or manage unwanted harmful pests (in its broader term), IPM should be seen as a multidisciplinary approach, including all relevant disciplines. In this context, creating EOH has its meaning, in that it will promote the kind of understanding for integrating various disciplines covering Entomology, Ornithology and Herpetology.

EOH will be a key in promoting the integration of the disciplines and I have found from experience that more and more integration is needed to achieve goals in promoting IPM and helping end users, many of whom are in developing nations. As well educated young scientists, freshly coming from the finest schools and well trained in dealing with pests, one is often reminded by farmers that they deal with a wide array of issues pertaining to pests (insects; birds, diseases, rodents, reptiles etc.). EOH provides and can serve as a great forum and a tool for integration. To the small farmer, this is the best way to address their needs and in diversifying solutions to their myriad of problems. Recently, I was in the process of writing a major paper dealing 'international trade and invasive pests [1] and quickly learned that such topic would be of greater significance and meaning if we not only include insect pests, but also other areas covering weeds, birds, reptiles, diseases and pathogens. This has also been a great motivator for including these topics in one course on the same topic I teach online.

The major problem in properly addressing IPM lies in the poor understanding of its definitions, but also in the bias toward the entomology discipline. As such, this narrow vision and knowledge on a complex, yet fascinating area can lead to poor implementation. Creating a journal which covers major disciplines in IPM provide a strong start and a great opportunity in helping and fostering understanding by scientists, practitioners, industry, private and public audiences.

Enabling Learning and Enhancing Education in IPM: Role of Open Access in an Era of Ailing Economies and Dwindling Financial Resources

I was amazed by the amount of literature (abounding and growing) related to open access to information with both pros and cons [2-10]. While each side is providing a case 'for' or 'reservation', depending on conviction, open access publishing can play a key role in our current educational system by helping students and learners, researchers and educators, and those enhancing education in keeping up with the demand for quality education, yet faced with ever shrinking resources; be it public or private. The number of open access resources and initiatives are growing [11,12], with a high level of discussions on pros and cons. I was fascinated to not only read these discussions in print, but also found a large number of videos talks and interviews as well [3-10]. I have attached a few web links pertaining to this. Although a growing debate as documented in an abounding literature (printed or on the World Wide Web), open access publishing and access to critical information will remain a topic of interest for years to come. Some of the key elements nowadays relate to the needs for increased learning, and training of more scientists around the world (especially in the developing countries), in an environment amid of high cost of education,

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even in the developed world. This same situation is also raised for learning and resource centers such as libraries which can face major challenges in meeting their traditional role played for many decades. Even though there are arguments in favor or cons for open access to information, the current economic contest and the needs to enhance higher education represent key elements which favor open access.

Given the continued reduction in resources and also need for greater access to high quality information and training of a large number of scientists in the world, open access publishing has its value. However, the debate remains and as the topic grows and more people come into the discussion, merits and values of open access will be more widely spelled out, not to ignore cons along side. Until then, to many countries, scientists and educators, it is of high priority that we educate current and future generations, and as the era of information and communication technology is soaring at its highest gear, one wonder s, how well the traditional model of publishing will hold, especially in a fast moving paperless communication and digital era.

In these few editorial notes, I have tried to link the journal with the current status and knowledge on integrated pest management (IPM) both from its current and historical perspectives, noting that unlike the biased believes, it is not an entomologists'-only domain, but a well integrated mix of critical areas to serve human kind. As the needs for higher education are at an even bigger demand at the time when many national economies are ailing in an unstable world economy, open access and use of information via electronic means will remain critical to our collective ability to train and develop current and future leaders and scientists in years to come. This is particularly important if we have to feed the world at its nine billionth counts by 2050.

Disclaimer

Ideas and discussions in this editorial reflect the author's views and do not constitute any endorsement or an institutional position of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

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