

## EDITORIAL

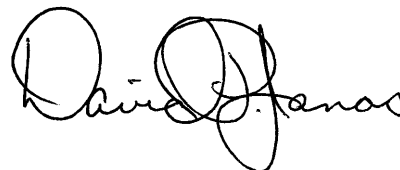
Michael F. Allen has served the international community of "mycorrhizasts" ably and unselfishly as Editor for the Americas of *Mycorrhiza* since its 1991 inception. He has presided during expansion of the journal from four to six issues per volume, and has seen it ranked among the top half of mycological journals. Mike Allen's efforts and achievements as editor merit our recognition and thanks.

Although Mike Allen passes his editorship to me with this issue, he still serves our community, together with Vivienne Gianinazzi-Pearson (who continues as Editor of *Mycorrhiza* for all countries outside the Americas), by leading an international committee to plan a professional society of mycorrhiza researchers. Society formation might accrue several advantages to our discipline. A society could organize the International Conference on Mycorrhiza (ICOM), and may better attract funding than an ad hoc committee. It would increase visibility and provide a collective voice to promote the importance of our field. It could support students to attend meetings, and could assist developing country libraries. If the society adopts *Mycorrhiza* as its journal, Springer-Verlag (publisher of *Mycorrhiza*) has offered to negotiate a substantially reduced subscription price for individual members. Mike Allen, Vivienne Gianinazzi-Pearson, and the committee deserve our support and gratitude for undertaking this initiative.

Transitions are times for reflection, and upon assuming the editorship for the Americas, I have considered the role of this dedicated journal. Dr. Walter Jülich, founding editor of *Mycorrhiza*, was prescient in sensing the need for a specialized journal collecting work on all aspects of mycorrhizas. *Mycorrhiza* is certainly the convenient place to turn to discover the breadth of mycorrhiza research today. Moreover, at the suggestion of the editorial board whose members well represent the diversity of international mycorrhiza research, *Mycorrhiza* will begin a series of invited review articles with topics and authors nominated by the editorial board. Nevertheless, the journal serves you, our readers and contributors, and you help mold it. We invite your manuscripts, and items for the Newscorner (announcements, commentaries on events, book, software or web site reviews, etc.), as well as feedback to the managing editors and editorial board.

As a dedicated journal, *Mycorrhiza* can unite our geographically, culturally, and linguistically diverse community if we *communicate* effectively in print. To that end, I suggest that we be mindful of our science's history, of old literature, and especially of careful definition. If we fail to acknowledge our intellectual forebears, we squander insight to be gained from antecedents of our own ideas. Ideas can no more arise *de novo* than can biological adaptations for which genetic precedents are absent. While publications in our discipline have mushroomed, a disturbing trend to cite only the most recent literature has appeared. We ignore early work at peril of inefficiently repeating it. Furthermore, cited literature must be thoroughly consulted, because erroneous citation undermines credibility. Finally, all rests upon the words we use, but common understanding occasionally seems lacking. For example, studies of glomalean mycorrhizas often quantify root colonization, but do not explicitly state the criteria for its determination (e.g., is it sufficient to see only hyphae and vesicles, or must arbuscules be present also?).

Our community still has much to understand and accomplish. At one level, we all know what an ectomycorrhiza is, but most generally, can we unequivocally define "mycorrhiza"? In answering, do we inadvertently spring a linguistic trap by extrapolating the functional designation "mutualism" – which is as dependent on environmental context as on organisms – to "mutualist", as if to be a mutualist is constitutive? This simple grammatical misstep may engender the conundrum "can mycorrhizas be parasitic?". Of course they can, under certain conditions, because mutualism and parasitism are the ends of the symbiotic functional continuum. What we must avoid is a dogmatic answer; may our science and *Mycorrhiza* eschew the doctrinaire. Perhaps the surest answer to "what is a mycorrhiza?" is that "*Mycorrhiza* is the international journal devoted to this topic in all its richness and diversity". As editor, I look forward to working with our community and to learning from you what "mycorrhiza" comprises.



David P. Janos  
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