

# UC Merced

## Frontiers of Biogeography

### Title

Frontiers of Biogeography: taking its place as a journal of choice for the publication of high quality biogeographical research articles

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## **Frontiers of Biogeography: taking its place as a journal of choice for the publication of high quality biogeographical research articles**

**Executive summary.** Through this editorial we seek your support and engagement as authors, readers and reviewers as we take the next steps in developing *Frontiers of Biogeography* as a leading international journal of biogeography and related subdisciplines. Here we make the case for submitting your next contribution to this journal: affordable, gold libre, open access, with the support of a disciplinarily-informed editorial and review team, which returns benefits to the biogeography community.

**Keywords:** Biogeography, macroecology, open access, publishing.

The landscape of scientific publication is changing quickly with the rise of open access, and the development of digital platforms and online editing tools (Dawson et al. 2017a,b). Journals with a primary focus on biogeography and related disciplines (e.g. macroecology, macroevolution, phylogeography) are among the most highly cited in Ecology, Evolution, Physical Geography or Biodiversity Conservation, to use some of the categories of Clarivate Analytics' (previously Thomson Reuters) *Journal Citation Reports* (JCR). This has resulted in competition for limited space in these journals, leaving an unmet need for much biogeographical research; that surplus has often been re-directed, at a hefty price, into second-tier open access 'mega-journals' that do not specialize in the subject matter. Thus, there is a need for another venue for biogeographical research that redresses these shortfalls, one that publishes across topic areas, themes, and methodologies. In this context, the *International Biogeography Society* (IBS) established *Frontiers of Biogeography* in 2009, with the intention of disseminating biogeographical knowledge, fostering scientific discussion among biogeographers, and publishing good biogeographical research of all kinds.

After almost ten years and following the publication of almost 400 articles and commentaries, *Frontiers of Biogeography* is already an established journal, with a demonstrable position in journal rankings. According to Elsevier's *Scopus* it ranks in the second quartile of the "Ecology, Evolution, Behavior and Systematics" category, with a CiteScore of 1.22 for 2017. The journal has the potential to serve as an important venue for scientific publications and play a central role in promoting our discipline. It also can provide a great service to biogeographers directly (see Box 1), by providing a high quality editorial process

led by practicing biogeographers, including professional copyediting and layout. Moreover, this is all provided in a gold standard open access publication at a small fraction of the cost of leading journals.

Nonetheless, we recognise that in order to realize the full potential of *Frontiers of Biogeography*, as an asset for the community of biogeographers, attaining JCR indexing is an important next step, as this will both improve the reach and dissemination of the journal and enhance the attractiveness to authors of the journal as a publication vehicle. To this end, the IBS is currently focusing on providing a higher level of support for the journal, to develop it as a repository for good quality and editorially well-curated biogeographical research publishing with the volume and regularity requisite with JCR listing criteria.

To support the development of the journal, we have renewed our editorial structure to substitute the former advisory board by an Advisory Council, initially comprising the President of the IBS, Dov Sax, and the former editors-in-chief of four leading international biogeography journals: David Currie, Carsten Rahbek, David Richardson and Robert J. Whittaker. The Advisory Council will support the editorial team in developing the practices and policies of the journal to take advantage of changes in publication practices in a period of rapid transition in the academic publishing model. The immediate goal is to provide biogeographers with a high quality, open access showcase for their research, without the constraints of limited page space or editors divining projected impact that fuel rejection rates of many prominent journals.

Consequently, a new strategic 'relaunch' has been planned by the Governing Board of the IBS, and the Advisory Council and Editorial Board of *Frontiers of Biogeography*. This relaunch includes a plan to attract a sufficient number of submissions to the journal to allow publishing larger issues, with more research papers, on a consistent schedule over the next two years. We believe that accomplishing this will continue to build readership (Figure 1) and provide the track record needed for the journal to be indexed in JCR, providing the momentum to attract a continuing flow of submissions. Once *Frontiers* has established this milestone, its continued development for the direct benefit of biogeographers should provide substantial long-term benefits for the IBS, the discipline and its members.

As part of this strategy we have also established a new "College of Biogeographers" for the journal. This college is currently comprised of thirty senior and mid-career biogeographers<sup>1</sup> who are respected in the discipline and have prior editorial experience. Members of the college can solicit and encourage

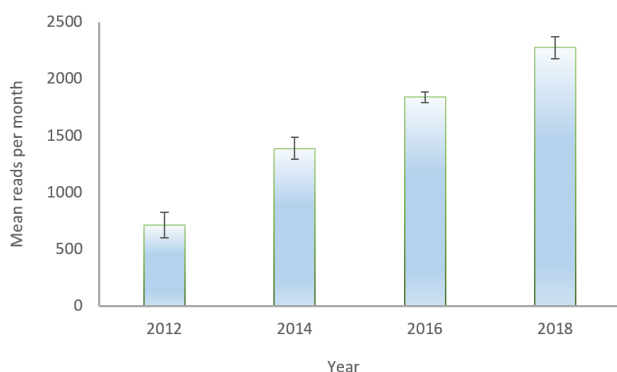
<sup>1</sup> You can consult the current members of the College of Biogeographers at <https://escholarship.org/uc/fb/Submission>

**Box 1. Key benefits of publication in *Frontiers of Biogeography***

In a nutshell: FoB offers high editorial standards, a constructive review process, open access, swift peer review and low author costs.

**Key points:**

- FoB offers a Gold-standard Open Access peer review journal, operated on a not-for-profit basis and published via the eScholarship (University of California) platform.
- FoB online platform includes fully searchable text, social media interfaces, direct dissemination efforts to biogeographers and greatly enhanced visibility through the standard search engines.
- FoB publishes both original research articles and a variety of other forms of article, consistent with the expanded array of article types and styles of contemporary science publishing.
- FoB offers a rigorous, fast, flexible and supportive review process and encourages submissions from all branches and schools of thought within biogeography.
- Article processing costs are currently US\$150 for IBS members and US\$300 for non-members, approximately 1/10th of open access fees for many leading journals, with waivers considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Full intellectual property rights are maintained by the authors.



**Figure 1.** Average number of independent reads, per month, of articles published in *Frontiers of Biogeography* since joining eScholarship in 2012. Each year is represented by the four-month average for February–May (except 2012 for which the first data available are August–November).

publications to the journal, as well as directly handle the editorial process for some of the solicited submissions in direct contact with the chief editors of *Frontiers of Biogeography*. This creates a new way of submitting research to the journal, through the direct contact with a college member, who may be able to help authors to raise the quality of their work, improving the quality of submissions that fall into their respective areas of expertise. This same help can be obtained from the members of the Editorial Board<sup>2</sup>, who can guide the authors to the best way of improving their research to the international standards of quality that the IBS and *Frontiers of Biogeography* are committed to provide for any kind of biogeographical research.

*Frontiers of Biogeography* provides a high quality, affordable, open access, alternative to for-profit journals and will continue to publish a variety of article formats. Crucially, at this juncture, we wish to encourage the biogeographical community to consider the journal as a natural home for regular empirical research papers on any topic within biogeography, regardless of school of thought or subdisciplinary subject area (see Box 1 for a summary of the key benefits of publishing with us). You may either submit your work directly to *Frontiers of Biogeography*, or contact a member of our Editorial Board or the College of Biogeographers for guidance about how to publish. The IBS, the editors of *Frontiers of Biogeography* and the members of the College of Biogeographers are committed to fostering development of your biogeographical research to meet the diversity and standards you desire and that advance our global discipline.

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