

## Editorial

## A New Editor-in-Chief for Land

Andrew Millington

College of Science and Engineering, Flinders University, GPO Box 2100, Adelaide, SA 5001, Australia;  
acmillington@gmail.com

In writing this editorial, I am signing off as the founding Editor-in-Chief of Land, and it is with great pleasure that I am handing over these duties to Professor Christine Fürst, who has been Section Editor-in-Chief of the Section “Landscape Ecology” since 2020.

I had recently moved to establish the School of the Environment at Flinders University in Adelaide, when I received the intriguing proposal from MDPI to help them establish Land. Perhaps realizing that my role as Foundation Dean of the School of the Environment would take me further from my research than I wanted, editing Land seemed like an opportunity to keep in touch with a broad sweep of land-focused research. However, due diligence was required; the journal scene is highly competitive, and competing new journals offer more benefits to rapidly grow their reputations, sometimes accepting a broader range of submissions. I looked at the names of the first editorial board and found many colleagues and collaborators, and searched the few names I did not know and found their web pages. I was sure of the basic academic bona fides, so I accepted the position.

As I have mentioned, the journal area is very competitive and there were already some journals specializing in aspects of land-based research. So, rather than focus on one or two aspects of land-based research, I adopted the ‘build it and they will (hopefully) come’ approach. The view being that the papers submitted would set the scope of the journal. I think the approach was broadly successful as, since 2019, Land has been able to start developing sections on the main themes within land research. Sections are a tool which MDPI uses to increase the success of journals. They are probably more of a management tool than an academic tool, as many of the papers in Land integrate different aspects of research. Sections, then, are a work in progress, and I look forward to seeing how they develop as I step back.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, I edited the long-established The Geographical Journal (its issue reporting the first ascent of Mount Everest by Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay exchanges hands at book auctions for serious money). Comparisons may be germane. Editing Land was easier as we have in-house editors working around the clock and in different locations, providing high levels of support and taking care of most of the administrative work. However, that has caused issues with some academics who have questioned whether all academic decisions are made by reviewers and academic editors. I want to go on the record here and say when such an issue has been raised it has been investigated by myself as Editor-in-Chief. The academic editors and editorial staff have put in place systems which guarantee that all academic decisions are made by academics.

Another difference between editing Land and The Geographical Journal has been the role of Special Issues. These were occasionally published in the 1980s and 1990s but have become a mainstay of many journals in contemporary academic publishing, with Land being no exception. In the ten volumes of Land published so far, there have been more than 40 successful Special Issues including at least 10 publications. Some concerns around Special Issues that existed in the 1980s remain, and it requires assiduous academic and editorial input to make sure Special Issues reach the academic standards any journal wishes to maintain.

How does one measure academic standards though? The reductionists amongst you will turn to metrics. Land was accepted for coverage in the Social Sciences Citation Index



**Citation:** Millington, A. A New Editor-in-Chief for Land. *Land* **2021**, *10*, 1088. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land10101088>

Received: 11 October 2021

Accepted: 11 October 2021

Published: 14 October 2021

**Publisher's Note:** MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



**Copyright:** © 2021 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

(SSCI—Web of Science) in 2019, starting from Volume 6, and received its first IF in 2020: 2.4293. Its 2020 IF is 3.395, which ranks 57th out of 125 (Q2) in the category “Environmental Studies (SSCI)”. However, academic standards are far more complex than a number and a ranking. They are also qualitative; one must have a feeling for the papers published. Questions such as the following can be asked:

- Do I have confidence in who is reviewing and editing the papers?
- Is the journal dealing with issues and research that are relevant—to me, to the wider world?
- Do the editors provide support in getting my research published? (Particularly important for relatively inexperienced authors)
- Are they open to publishing research from countries where universities are underfunded or undervalued?
- What are their credentials and policies in terms of gender and persons of color?

During my term as Editor-in-Chief, I have tried to deal with some of those questions but, as with all academic journals, Land has a way to go on some of these issues while, of course, trying to adhere to the highest editorial standards: academic publishing *is* a competitive arena. Recently, MDPI has established a diversity and inclusion committee and joined the SDG Publishers Compact (MDPI announcement) with focus on SDG10: Reduced Inequalities, as a way of supporting diversity and fairness in the publishing industry.

So, after publishing 2000 articles under my tenure, I can confidently hand over Land to Christine, knowing that there is a solid foundation to build on. I would like to thank the Section Editors; members of the Advisory, Editorial, Reviewer and Topical Advisory Boards; paper reviewers; and MDPI’s editorial team for their hard work and support for the journal over the last decade.

**Author Contributions:** A.M. planned and wrote this Editorial. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Acknowledgments:** Flinders University provided the time and resources that enabled me to edit Land.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.