

Editorial

Soil Systems: Change in Editor-In-Chief: Future Aims and Scopes

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With this Editorial, I wish to inform our readers that in February 2021, I became the new coordinator of the Editors (Editor in Chief) of *Soil Systems*. I am replacing Dr. Scott Fendorf, who has held this position since the introduction of the journal in 2017 and whose work is greatly acknowledged.

In taking up the editorship of *Soil Systems*, I wish to point out that the journal will continue with its multidisciplinary approach, providing a high-quality and international forum in the field of soil science and related research areas. Despite being relatively young, *Soil Systems* achieved 133 submissions in 2020, 70 of which were published within a median processing time of 51 days. Recognizing the efficacy of Special Issues in giving adequate attention to important aspects of soil systems by attracting high-quality contributions focusing on specific research topics, six Special Issues were closed for submission last year. For 2021, four calls for Special Issues are already open, but additional effort shall be undertaken to increase this number to ensure appropriate coverage of the whole range of theoretical and applied topics associated with such a complex natural system as soil.

Indeed, soil represents an important and delicate interface between biosphere, hydrosphere, atmosphere, and lithosphere, and many journals are already available that deal with one aspect or another of this interface. Having changed the name of the journal from *Soils* to *Soil Systems* in 2018, the journal differentiated itself from others in the field by giving particular attention to the importance of interdisciplinary approaches and system thinking for a better understanding of soil functions [1]. By providing a forum for ideas that challenge convention or step outside of accepted paradigms, we hope to provoke discussions resulting in new ideas and advanced understanding.

Soils are complex systems in which biological, chemical, and physical processes define soil development and are crucial for soil ecosystem functions, plant productivity, and water quality. With the goal of covering most of the research areas, dedicated to a better understanding of this complexity, the articles published in *Soil Systems* will be assigned to special subject areas. They will be dedicated to more general topics, such as the complex processes and interactions involved in *Soil Development* and *Soil Degradation* and loss, as well as to research topics that are more specifically focused on *Biological and Biogeochemical Processes* or *Chemical and Physical Processes*. The first will emphasize the impact of flora, fauna, and microorganisms but also on their implications in biogeochemical processes such as humification, soil organic matter formation, or biomineralization, and vice versa. Research on processes that are mainly attributed to non-biotic mechanisms will be included in the latter.

Contributions aiming to shed some light on the complex *Interactions on Soil Interfaces* (water, mineral surfaces, organic matter, pollutants, microbiomes, etc.) and research reports concentrating on the role of the soil interface within the global biogeochemical cycles are equally appreciated. The latter will contribute to the subject area *Soil as C and N Sink*. However, soils are not only C and N sinks but also sources, and, as such, they are key players in modifying and ameliorating the risks and effects of climate change by regulating dynamic biochemical processes and the exchange of greenhouse gases with the atmosphere. This aspect will be recognized in the subject area entitled *Cycling of Elements*.



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The equilibrium of established soil systems is constantly challenged, particularly due to soil management but also by natural and anthropogenic disturbances such as fire, flooding, overgrazing, spills, shifting land-use, or shifting conditions due to climatic change. Research aiming for a better understanding of these alterations shall be included within the subject areas *Impact of Soil Disturbance* and *Impact of Soil Management*. Comparably, the classical areas of *Nutrient Cycling* and *Dynamics of Pollutants and Xenobiotics in Soils* will be covered, although the focus shall be on process-orientated studies.

In consideration of the increasing research interest in plant–microbiome interactions, and recognizing that complex interconnected microbial networks are not only important for plant and soil health but also for ecosystem functioning, the subject area *Soil–Plant–Microbiome–Interactions* has been included. However, in line with the general scope of the journal, research presented here shall be related and orientated toward a better understanding of the soil system, rather than focusing on improved plant nutrition or pesticide avoidance.

Last but not least, we will provide a platform for the introduction and discussion of *New Analytical Tools for a Better Understanding of Soil Processes*, which will be also covered by a special subject area.

The mentioned subject areas will be managed by a diverse and eminent scientific editorial board appointed to represent the breadth of the disciplines and topical areas of *Soil Systems*. Their combined and collective experience will ensure the highest degree of scientific rigor and review of all published articles.

Soil Systems publishes reviews, regular research papers, communications, and short notes, without restriction on the length of the papers. In addition to individual articles, and as mentioned before, the journal will devote considerable efforts to publishing Special Issues dedicated to the synthesis of important and timely topics, including selected papers presented at relevant conferences.

As with other journals from MDPI, *Soil Systems* is an open-access journal. Publication costs are independent of article length and relatively modest compared to many other open access journals. The reader has the advantages of free access via the web, which increases authors' ability to reach many readers, including those without access to expensive subscriber journals. The latter point suggests that the long-term impact of the journal will be high. On the other hand, the authors can include electronic files and software as supplementary material, as well as color figures, at no cost and can count on rapid publication. The open access feature is important given the rapidly growing research community across the world, including many countries that have not historically been very active in this area. Thus, the journal provides straightforward and inexpensive access to high-quality research for as many researchers and other interested readers as possible.

I expect that *Soil Systems* will develop into a leading journal for multidisciplinary research in soil science. To achieve this objective, all members of the editorial and production offices will work hard to provide the best service possible. However, this goal cannot be reached without you, our potential authors. Therefore, I invite you cordially to submit original, high-quality research as well as comprehensive review articles to *Soil Systems* and, in doing so, sharing your important findings and contributions within the global community.

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

Reference

1. Fendorf, S. Soils—An Open Access Journal. *Soils* **2017**, *1*, 7. [[CrossRef](#)]