



Editorial - May 2011: The new face of *New Disease Reports*

Independent of its sister BSPP journal *Plant Pathology* since January 2010, *New Disease Reports* (NDR) has continued to publish short reports on plant diseases that provide context-relevant information on new geographical occurrence, new hosts or new aspects of plant pathogenicity. Consequently, this online journal has undergone a radical transformation.

Readers of this editorial will be aware that the new NDR website is still linked with and part of the wider British Society for Plant Pathology family (<http://bspp.org.uk>) but with output and presentation enhanced in many ways. The format of published reports has been expanded with longer text (maximum of ca. 520 words) and more references (maximum six) and space for additional key words (not in title). Tables of data are now permitted (within the allowance of a maximum of five Figures). Recently, output in portable document format (PDF) has been provided.

In terms of formal bibliometrics, NDR has an ISSN (2044-0588) and published papers bear a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) assigned as each report is published online. The British Society for Plant Pathology's prefix allocated by *CrossRef* (<http://crossref.org>) together with the NDR identifier is doi:10.5197/j.2044-0588. NDR publishes two volumes per year and since the middle of 2010 the two volumes are now aligned properly with the calendar year (January-June and July-December). There are no issues as such, but each paper is assigned a number, effectively a page number. The DOI for each paper records the year, volume and (page) number. There is thus a chronology of publication and papers appear with a degree of regularity. For papers submitted in 2010 on which a decision has been made, the interval between submission and decision is 2.7 months. This breaks down to just over four months and just less than two months for accepted and rejected papers respectively.

The primary statement of our objectives may be found on our website at <http://ndrs.org.uk/about.php>. The nature and format of papers in NDR has been designed to give maximum impact for the stated purpose. Papers published in NDR were previously limited in length to what could be fitted on a half page of *Plant Pathology*. Without this limitation, longer papers with more references are now allowed and encouraged with the limitation of a one-page PDF output, which has the benefit of retaining the same virtual pagination as the online publication.

However, the traditional components or headings of a research paper (Introduction, Materials and Methods, Conclusions) are not appropriate for such a short 'disease note'. An Abstract would be superfluous but we have introduced *additional key words* (not in title). NDR is entirely dedicated to stated purpose or rapid communication of disease notes and the like. Deliberately we do not include other types of papers such as notes on methodology and experimental inoculations for host range that are found

in other journals accommodating short communications on new diseases. In this respect NDR is believed to be unique at the international level.

Over the period 2006-2010, the rejection rate of submissions was consistently in the range of 55-60%, with most rejections made at the 'filter stage' by the senior editor. Apart from poor science and poor identification of the pathogen, the main criterion for rejection is lack of 'significance' as explained in the web page giving instructions to authors (<http://ndrs.org.uk/authors.php>). The overriding necessity is for a paper to report on disease rather than merely provide an addition to the plant pathogen records. The preliminary review interprets 'significance' in accordance with the type of plant pathogen being reported: fungus, oomycete, bacterium, nematode, virus/viroid or phytoplasma.

Another option for the senior editor is to suggest a revision to improve 'significance' by providing more information on the impact of the pathogen on the host. Then the paper has more chance of being retained in the pipeline. It is however noteworthy that for the last six months of 2010 and the first four months of 2011 the rejection rate has dropped to around 48%. This suggests that authors are paying more attention to selection criteria resulting in better quality papers; and that this is beginning to compensate for the lower rate of initial submissions seen since NDR's independence from *Plant Pathology* (something probably attributable to the loss of the Impact Factor associated with *Plant Pathology*).

Once past the filter, the paper is passed to a specialist editor for detailed review and most papers then remain in the pipeline for ultimate publication. There are currently 24 editors, whose range and specialisms may be seen at <http://ndrs.org.uk/editors.php>. The senior editor's brief biography is at <http://bspp.org.uk/profiles/black.php>. The editors have primary responsibility as peer reviewers. They are at liberty to consult anonymous referees and will do so when necessary but they are conscious of the objective of NDR for rapid publication of short notes.

To come in future editorials:

Formatting your paper for NDR correctly

Who wants to publish in NDR and on what subjects?

Publish and be damned? - Sensitivities over release of records relevant to plant quarantine