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<http://botany.ru.ac.za/saab/SAAB.htm>

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR SAAB MEDALS AND AWARDS AND HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

The SAAB council hereby wishes to invite all corporate members (only full members, life and honorary members, **not** affiliate, student and retired members) to nominate candidates for the following medals and awards:

I. The South African Gold Medal for Botany

This medal will only be awarded in exceptional circumstances, to outstanding candidates and is the premier award for Botany in South Africa and will be awarded to any botanist on the grounds of outstanding research and contributions to the advancement of Botany in South Africa.

Nominations: A *curriculum vitae* of the proposed candidate must be submitted, as well as a complete list of publications and an evaluation of the candidate's scientific contribution to Botany. Council will hold no discussion concerning the nominated candidates. To be elected, at least eight Council members must record a favourable vote.

II. The SAAB Silver Medal for Botany

May be awarded to any botanist on the grounds of outstanding research and/or other contributions to the advancement of Botany in South Africa.

Nominations: The same as those laid down for the South African Gold Medal for Botany (only seven Council members must record a favourable vote).

III. The SAAB Certificate of Merit

The certificate will be awarded for outstanding contributions in the scientific, technical, artistic, and educational or any other botanical field, made to persons not in possession of a university degree in Botany.

Nominations: The same as those laid down for the South African Gold Medal for Botany (only seven Council members must record a favourable vote).

ELECTION OF HONORARY MEMBERS

Honorary membership shall be proposed by a member, and be seconded by ten or more members. All proposers and seconders shall be Corporate members in good standing. The proposal shall be accompanied by a full curriculum vitae as well as by reasons motivating the proposal.

The proposal shall be considered by a committee of three experts in the same field as the candidate. Council will nominate the committee.

Further information regarding the nominations is explained in the constitution.

Nominations must reach the secretary not later than **20 September 1999**. For a copy of the constitution, contact the secretary or visit the website at <http://botany.ru.ac.za/saab/SAAB.htm>.

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Is my suit on backwards?

THE FUTURE OF SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF BOTANY UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

Following an announcement by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Dr BS Ngubane, that "*We will support only the top general science journal and we will provide medium-term seed funding for the development of one or two journals in niche research publication areas*", an in-depth analysis of the current state of funding of the above mentioned journal and the mechanisms according to which it is produced, became necessary.

The editors of the South African Journal of Botany are looking at means of streamlining the journal, without sacrificing quality. Different publishing options are investigated, as well as a possibility of producing electronic copies. Changing might also mean amalgamation, or a name and strategy change for the journal. In order to satisfy the needs of as many members as possible a questionnaire was sent to all the members. Thank you for the members who took the time to complete and send it back. The results are published below. Council is having a meeting in July regarding the future of the journal. Their decision will be published in the next edition of Forum. Members are welcome to submit their ideas to Forum for publishing.

SURVEY OF SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF BOTANY

RESULTS

n = 154

STATEMENT	YES	NO	NO VOTE
I regularly read SAJB	82%	8%	10%
I almost never open SAJB	9%	62%	29%
I would like to be a SAAB member, but do not want to receive SAJB	14%	66%	20%
SAJB fulfills an important function	91%	2%	7%
SAJB should amalgamate with other plant journals to save costs, even if it involves a name change	42%	39%	19%

I am prepared to pay higher page fees	21%	55%	24%
SAJB should appear as 6 issues per year, two dedicated to each of the major disciplines – Physiology, Taxonomy, Ecology	28%	45%	27%
I think SAJB is of high scientific standing	68%	16%	16%
I will in future support SAJB with my own contributions	53%	20%	27%
I would like to see the impact factor increase	70%	11%	19%
SAJB should cease to exist	3%	60%	37%

MEMBERS' COMMENTS on the questions

(Numbers in brackets indicates amount of members sharing that view)

I regularly read SAJB

I belong to SAAB to receive the journal (3)

With interest: the standard of articles seems to me good.

Always, Look forward to it (6)

First, the index, but not always in great detail, Scan, not read all

Depends on contents, Some articles, Only my discipline

Not many articles on Plant Physiology/Molecular Biology

No physiology, No ecology, Applied ecology/conservation papers absent (24)

I almost never open SAJB

Yes, because, there is no physiology (2)

Papers is recount of specific board members (2)

Limited interest to Limnologists, Marine algae (2)

I scan articles to look for articles of interest (7)

What a shame!!!

I would like to be a SAAB member, but do not want to receive SAJB

I do want to be a member; I do want to receive the journal; SAJB is essential; To receive the journal is the best part of being a SAAB member (12)

There is not need for a personal copy, as long as there is an institutional subscription (3)

Ek dink dit is voldoende as SAJB slegs aan groot instansies se biblioteke gestuur word. Dit behoort koste baie te sny as dit nie aan elke lid gestuur word nie.

Would be a good option (2)

SAJB fulfills an important function

Not for plant physiology (2)

I am sure it does for systematics/taxonomists (2)

A local botanical journal is needed (5)

Maybe (4)

There seems to be fewer ecology contributions

Some restructuring is needed (4)

SAJB should amalgamate with other plant journals to save costs, even if it involves a name change

This should be investigated – We have a number of journals that cover similar fields, which could be amalgamated

Definitely (3), It is an option (12)

New name should have reference to Botany or SAJB should be stated as included. This may be a good idea, SA Journal of Plant Sciences? (6)

Do not have sufficient knowledge to see all the implications (5)

Which other journals? (3) Bothalia ? (4)

Aim a high quality vegetation science journal for Southern Africa

An attempt should perhaps be made for a regional/African Journal.

I do not think so. What are the other plant journals to amalgamate with? (4)

Please not if possible (7)

As one of the nations with an extremely diverse flora, it will be an absolute tragedy if we fold our only serious botanical journal. What an indictment this will be of the botanical community in South Africa

I am prepared to pay higher page fees

ABSOLUTELY NOT; Cheaper to publish overseas (6)

Only if the journal proceed in terms of impact factor, at the moment it is extremely low.

Our institute pays (3)

But up to 25% higher is acceptable; Within reason (7)

SAJB should appear as 6 issues per year; two dedicated to each of the major disciplines – Physiology, Taxonomy, and Ecology

OK as is, so many papers will not fit into these three categories

Four General issues per annum to save costs and to limit delay (9)

Publish, as papers become available

Six issues, but publish papers as they come in, not as sorted issues, it may alienate some readers (5)

Each issue should be balanced with articles on each discipline.

Contents should remain mixed (17)

The physiology issues would be very thin indeed

However, options may be for people to choose one or more of disciplines on a pro-rata basis. I am not interested in Physiology.

What is the view of the editorial committee and the profession regarding ethnobotany and economic botany, both of which seem to be assuming a major role in research in plant sciences? Would conservation biology fall under ecology? (3)

No real preferences (7)

I think SAJB is of high scientific standing

Articles vary in standard; Not for plant physiology (5)

No, but serves a valuable local/national purpose

It is not at all; Impact rating is quite low (7)

OK. How relevant to real issues

Concerning Taxonomy, Yes! (2)

Among the best of SA productions

I will in future support SAJB with my own contributions

Possibly (8)

I have in the past and when appropriate continue to do so (11)

I am mainly working on East-African flora

Prefer international journals for my type of work

I am presently very involved in policy development and in its present format, SAJB is not a suitable publication medium

No, other journals (Afr. J. Range & Forage Sci; SAJ Sci, etc.) provide better profile

Not the right journal for my current field of interest (5)

Provided the impact factor improves (6)

Not possible for an amateur botanist

Not in research; Retired member (17)

I would like to see the impact factor increase

Definitely!! (5)

What does this mean? (11)

SAJB should cease to exist

NO; Definitely not; Should definitely continue (6)

There is still a place for the journal provided the management of the journal improves – and the editorial board does not use it to publish all their rubbish!

It should remain, but perhaps not in current format (4)

GENERAL REMARKS

SAJB fulfills an important need for Botany in SA ; I believe strongly that SAJB is an important journal that deserves support (15)

There is a need for a SA Botanical Journal. Whether this publication retains the current format or is amalgamated with other journals is immaterial. SAJB should not be retained merely for sentimental reasons. The editorial board and SAAB executive should be pragmatic in their deliberations. Need to do a proper market survey on the journal to see what is the future.

Criticism:

- ◆ Font too small
- ◆ Impact has gone down, this matter needs attention.
- ◆ While I feel that SAJB is of high scientific standing, I also feel that the quality of the paper and printing used has declined a lot in recent years. No doubt, this is due to over-escalating printing costs.
- ◆ I find some referees unnecessarily rude and outspoken. A high standard can be achieved without such comments. My experience of overseas referees suggests that they are constructive without being abrasive.
- ◆ Photographic reproduction is poor and should be improved

- ◆ Dit spyt my dat SAJB slegs artikels in Engels aanvaar – dit is 'n onding en moet verander word!
- ◆ Ek kan verstaan dat die joernaal in Engels veskyn, maar julle kan gerus hierdie vorm tweetalig gemaak het. As 80% van die lede Engels was kon ek dit nog verstaan het.
- ◆ I do not regard SAJB as an exciting journal. It does not reflect the exciting flora that we have in this country. This is because most scientists publish the results of their studies in overseas journals. I suggest that scientists that present interesting and good papers at conferences should be approached by the editors and asked to publish the results of their studies in SAJB.
- ◆ Important to have the journal as avenue to publish in – especially local botanists. Problem though is much material published is obscure and not relevant to issues forcing our botanical knowledge.
- ◆ The journal seldom includes articles on marine algae, which is my major interest. Am I to understand that phycologists do not submit to this journal?
- ◆ It would be good to see color pictures on the cover. It is great to have a local journal for publishing information about local science where it is performed and enjoyed.
- ◆ Over the last couple of years there has been too much emphasis on plant physiology with little on taxonomy, plant tissue culture, etc. The last few issues have however been more balanced and of more interest. Perhaps there is room for only one Botanical Journal in SA.
- ◆ Very much taxonomic and exclusive – much focus on University basic research with no practical impact/bearing or addressing/implications stated. The latter is very important in SA lately. Funds for basic research for the sake of research is decreasing. Impact is necessary for motivation for financial support from other sources. Would like to see more international manuscripts published in SAJB.
- ◆ I seldom read SAJB any more, because there seem to be fewer and fewer articles that are of interest to me as an ecologist.
- ◆ Page charges encourage would-be contributors to first look elsewhere for a publisher. The low scientific impact of the journal publication in subject – specialist journals. There is a need for a journal to publish research of local concern, but in ecology; for instance, there are better options elsewhere.
- ◆ Increased cost to the societies resulting from the removal of the publication subsidy will require a rationalization of the number of journals covering Physiology, Taxonomy, and Ecology and plant production. It would be a great pity if researchers were forced to publish in overseas journals because a suitable journal is not available in South Africa. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the surviving journals are able to accommodate a broader range of fields.

- ◆ I think Namibian articles or those covering Namibian plants should be reviewed by Namibian botanists, like Dr. Gillian Maggs-Kolling and Ms Herta Kolberg or NBRI.

Recommendations:

- Nedbank Green Trust should be approached to provide a trust fund, the interest from which can be used to help publish SAJB, before it eventually switches to electronic form.
- I think the Journal should have papers from each discipline in each issue, otherwise it will take too long to get papers published. One of the nice features of publishing in SAJB is the speed that papers go through the process. Perhaps the papers can be grouped by discipline in each issue, like Plant Physiology does, but using broader categories such as Physiology, Taxonomy, Ecology, etc. Perhaps non-members publishing in SAJB can be charged a higher rate than members.
- SAJB should be amalgamated with other South African life science journals to form one or two high quality journals. The excessive contributions from taxonomists and phyto-sociologists gives no profile of a journal representing the full spread of Botany in SA.
- Amalgamate all scientific journals in SA into SA Journal of Science. Increase SA's scientific standing with this and then specialize slowly again where it is worth it.
- Essential for all South Africans who love plants at the botanical level. Greater variation of articles needed. Researchers should be persuaded to invest in SAJB as international Journal, by publishing there.
- A country with such a wide diversified flora should have its own "scientific mouthpiece". It would be a sad day for South African botany to see its demise. We should make every effort to sustain SAJB and assist it to thrive as South Africa's authoritative journal on botanical research.
- A local botanical journal is NB. However, papers really need to have wider interest. Conservation/applied ecology/ecology papers are very scarce in SAJB. Yet, no other journal is available to publish local interest papers in these categories.
- SAJB could become the African Journal of Botany.
- At present too parochial and narrow in subject matter. Needs to be an Africa-wide journal.
- As Acting Editor of Afr J. Range & Forage Science, I believe that both journals should continue separately but numbers per volume should be kept low. Let us publish, short, high quality journals within our perspective disciplines.

- We need to impress on government on relevance and value of scientific journals as a whole. Having said that we need to look seriously at Bothalia and SAJB concerning rationalization. Couldn't Bothalia cater for mainly taxonomic and ecological papers and SAJB the rest?
- SAJB serves the needs of both botanists and mycologists, particularly in getting new taxa into print in relatively short time. Care should be taken that the SAJB is not watered down to a popular horticultural magazine.
- In SA, we have 3 place to publish our articles: SAJB, SAJSci, and African Plant Protection. There is zero rating and therefore not worthwhile. Articles are not always suitable for SAJSci. THEREFORE, SAJB is suitable outlet for us. Plantpathology is a much applied science and this might conflict with traditional attitudes in Botany – but perhaps an amalgamation of African Plant Protection & SAJB could help towards reducing costs. In addition, the journal should go electronic. Higher page fees are always a problem. If the journal becomes more applied advertising could help cover costs, i.e. scientific equipment, agricultural products, jobs.
- Hope you make good decisions in a difficult time for the sciences. You might increase readership (and SAAB membership) if you included a semi-popular section at the back, summarizing botanical developments worldwide and inc. amateur observations, concerns in conservation, climate change, etc. I DO NOT volunteer to produce it. GOOD LUCK

The following members made general remarks and signed their names, therefore it was assumed they want to be recognized for their inputs. Thank you very much.

Dr DJB Killick:

1. I suggest that you reduce the number of members on the editorial board, which has shot up from 3 to 15. Why the excessive number of board members, is this just to impress?
2. The Latin descriptions of new taxa leave a lot to be desired in spite of referral to "experts"
3. Technical editing. There is a lack of consistency in the editing e.g. punctuation, verb number, etc.
4. Under Editorial Policy in the Instructions to Authors it is stated that 'concise objective evaluation of books which have been published will be solicited by the Scientific Editor. Judging from recent issues of the journal, it would appear that no suitable books have been published in the RSA of late. Surely, if a journal is held in high esteem, publishers will automatically send new books for review. This certainly happened when I was editor of botanical journals.

Nicky Allsopp, UWC:

I would like to see a flagship journal of high quality on vegetation science emerging from amalgamation of all the struggling SA Journals in this field. I

would be prepared to serve on the editorial board of such a journal. The problem that I foresee is the difficulty a number of professional bodies will have in losing the identity associated with their journals albeit that these are struggling. Suggestion: "**African Journal of Vegetation Science**"

K.D. Gordon-Gray:

It has been great pleasure during a long period to have had articles published in SAJB (and before this name came into being). Always there have been helpful comments from reviewers, competence, and efficiency from the editorial staff, and courtesy and consideration from all concerned. It will be tragic should SAJB cease to exist, or to be so modified its impact would be altered (reduced).

Alex J Valentine, US:

I think that SAJB can be made into a much better journal by implementing the following, or some of it:

1. Becoming discipline specific
2. Wider audience scope with a name change, e.g. The African Journal of Plant Science, has a much less stodgy ring to it than SAJB, and will capture the audience of the whole continent.
3. Have review articles in the issues, and let the review be known as a prestigious commission. Just look at New Phytologists' Tansley Review, named after its founder.
4. Get the local botanists to publish at least for one year all their best articles, in the New Journal instead of overseas
5. Advertise at least once a semester in a popular science magazine like New Scientist.
6. Allow companies like Sigma, Merck and the like, use a few pages to advertise their products. This might reduce the costs from SAAB to publish the journal.
7. Pay tribute, in each discipline specific issue to a famous contributor to that specific field. Having a draft summary of the person's work and life can do this. Ann. Rev. of Plant Phys has the same feature, and it makes the journal more readable.
8. Please improve the cover of the journal. Perhaps one could have pictures of experiments on the cover, as in P.C&E., Plant and Soil, Annals of Botany. Alternatively, if this will be too expensive, change the logo. New Phytologist looks appealing without pictures or logos. Perhaps one could have a competition at the next SAAB, 2001 for a new cover logo for SAJB.

Botanical Diary

Forthcoming Conferences, Congresses and Workshops

Indigenous Plant Use Forum 25-28 July 2000

Hotel Promenade, Louis Trichardt

Themes:

1. Role of horticulture in Product Development
2. Transfer of Indigenous Knowledge
3. Patenting and Breeder's Rights

Contact person: Ms Bettie de Beer, Bettie@NRF.ac.za, Tel. (012) 4814034

Arid Zone Ecology Forum 14 - 17 August 2000

Kliprand Recreational Hall, Kakamas.

Themes:

1. Alternative (tenure systems) to non-sustainable pastoralism:
Subsidised destocking, Conservation, Agriculture and ecotourism, and
Specialist agriculture
2. Water in the arid zone:

Contact person: Ms Bettie de Beer, Bettie@NRF.ac.za, Tel. (012) 4814034

Bulb Symposium

28-31 Augustus 2000

Kirstenbosch, Cape Town

Themes: Ecology, taxonomy and conservation
Selection, breeding, genetics and plant protection
Biotechnology
Growth, development and flowering
Production and forcing

Daily, as well as all inclusive rates available.

A guided tour through Kirstenbosch and an exclusive visit to the indigenous bulb collection will also take place.

Contact person: Retha Venter, reventer@netactive.co.za, Tel. (021) 8554472

Medecos 2000

11-15 September 2000

Konservatorium, University of Stellenbosch
Stellenbosch

Themes: Mediterranean-type ecosystems. Past, present and future
Contact person: Ms G Kruger, kruger@jaywalk.com, Tel. (021)465-1609,
Fax. (021)461-8926
or view their website at <http://www.botany.uwc.ac.za/medecos>

AMFA

The 5th African Farm Management Association Congress
13-17 November 2000

International Conference Centre
Kampala, Uganda

Theme: Africa: Competitive Agriculture in the 21st Century
Contact persons: Mr G Lukwago, ucdajm@swiftuganda.com
Tel: Kampala, (041) 254448; 233073; 256940
Mrs E K Ruvwa, pco@infocom.co.ug
Mr SLB Lwasa, weessed@starcom.co.ug

South African Association of Botanists

27th Annual Conference 14-17 January 2001

Rand Afrikaans University, Auckland Park, Johannesburg

Themes: Four parallel sessions in Ecology, Systematics, Ethnobotany and
Physiology

Contact persons: Dr M van der Bank
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