

From: Bob Mesibov <mesibov@southcom.com.au>
To: margaret.sheil@arc.gov.au
Subject: ERA ranking of systematics journals - further SASB comment
Date: Fri, 19 Mar 2010 22:22:02 +1100

Dear Professor Sheil,

Thank you for your posted reply. You have explained how the List was produced and why you might be satisfied with it: expert advice was used. You have also left the door open for a future revision, date unspecified.

You have not, however, specifically addressed the concerns of systematists or the special nature of taxonomic publication. Instead, you have given me even more reason to distrust the process by which the List was generated.

You say, for example, that "We received a number of reviews for *Zootaxa* and for each of the Australian museum journals referred to in your email. The advice from discipline experts was that a C rank was appropriate for these journals."

Zootaxa is the world's leading animal systematics journal. For an animal systematist to give *Zootaxa* a 'C' ranking rather than 'A*', or at least 'A', would be like an applied physicist ranking *Applied Physics Letters* 'C'. It is, frankly, unbelievable that a knowledgeable animal systematist in Australia or anywhere else would rank *Zootaxa* 'C'.

The *International Journal of Systematic and Evolutionary Microbiology* gets a 'B' ranking, which is equally remarkable. Under the Bacteriological Code, *IJSEM* is the only journal in which new prokaryote names and descriptions can be officially published. A prokaryote taxonomist publishes there or nowhere. How is it possible that *IJSEM* gets a ranking with this description?:

"Tier B covers journals with a solid, though not outstanding, reputation. Generally, in a Tier B journal, one would expect only a few papers of very high quality. They are often important outlets for the work of PhD students and early career researchers. Typical examples would be regional journals with high acceptance rates, and editorial boards that have few leading researchers from top international institutions."

It is hard to believe that systematists were consulted as discipline experts, or that those consulted were 'expert'. In other words, either systematics was not treated as a separate discipline, or it was and those consulted were incompetent. I don't expect that ARC is prepared to disclose who ranked which journals, so there is no way for outsiders like myself to evaluate this possibility and suggest ways to avoid silly errors in future.

For my own interest I looked at the rankings of the 80 systematics journals I compiled last year for the SASB website (<http://www.sasb.org.au/journals.html>). These are listed below. The bizarre ranking of *Zootaxa* is not as disappointing as the 'C' rankings for the local and regional journals which are the primary outlets for Australian taxonomists and evolutionary biologists. We have globally respected researchers in this country producing high-quality publications of enduring value in systematics - and deprecated by the ARC-ERA evaluation system.

Your reply to my earlier email has given me no reason to expect that this absurd situation can be changed for the better.

Regards,
 Bob Mesibov
 President, Society of Australian Systematic Biologists

Rankings: (n = not ERA-listed)

Local and regional outlets for systematics publications:

C Australian Entomologist
 B Australian Journal of Entomology
 B Australian Systematic Botany
 C General and Applied Entomology
 B Invertebrate Systematics
 n Journal of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens
 C Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand
 C Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia
 B Kanunnah
 C Memoirs of Museum Victoria
 C Memoirs of the Queensland Museum
 C Muellera
 C New Zealand Entomologist
 C New Zealand Journal of Botany
 C New Zealand Journal of Zoology
 C Nuytsia
 C Pacific Science
 C Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania
 C Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales
 C Proceedings of the Royal Society of Victoria
 C Raffles Bulletin of Zoology
 C Records of the Australian Museum
 n Records of the Queen Victoria Museum
 C Records of the Western Australian Museum
 C Species Diversity
 C Telopea
 C The Beagle
 C Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia
 (incorporating Records of the South Australian Museum)

Global outlets:

C Acta Parasitologica
 A American Journal of Botany
 C Aquatic Insects
 n Arthropod Systematics and Phylogeny
 C Biochemical Systematics and Ecology
 B Biological Journal of the Linnean Society
 C Blumea
 A BMC Evolutionary Biology

B Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society
 C Brittonia
 A Cladistics
 C Crustaceana
 A* Evolution
 C International Journal of Acarology
 n International Journal of Myriapodology
 B International Journal of Plant Sciences
 B International Journal of Systematic and Evolutionary Biology
 C International Journal of Tropical Insect Science
 C Journal of Arachnology
 A Journal of Biogeography
 C Journal of Crustacean Biology
 A Journal of Evolutionary Biology
 B Journal of Helminthology
 C Journal of Natural History
 B Journal of Systematics and Evolution
 C Journal of the Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom
 C Journal of Zoological Systematics and Evolutionary Research
 n Marine Biodiversity
 A Molecular Biology and Evolution
 A Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution
 C Molluscan Research
 C Mycotaxon
 C Organisms, Diversity and Evolution
 A Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics
 n Phytotaxa
 A Plant Systematics and Evolution
 C Systematic and Applied Acarology
 A* Systematic Biology
 B Systematic Botany
 B Systematic Entomology
 C Systematic Parasitology
 C Systematics and Biodiversity
 A Taxon
 B The Bryologist
 C The Lichenologist
 n ZooKeys
 B Zoologica Scripta
 A Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society
 B Zoologischer Anzeiger
 C Zoosystema
 C Zoosystematics and Evolution
 C Zootaxa