



## *Phycological Society Of America*

Susan H. Brawley, President

5735 Hitchner Hall

School of Marine Sciences, University of Maine

Orono, ME 04469, USA

Telephone: 207-581-2973 Fax: 207-581-2801 brawley@maine.edu

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Dear PSA Members,

The recent First Referendum on “phycology” in the Journal name produced a little more confusion than intended, but the EC’s primary intent was to gather information from the membership, and we got it (i.e., more than 50 variations on a small set of suggested alternative titles for the Society’s Journal, which are being evaluated). We’d probably all agree that the name of the Journal is *not* the most important factor in the success of our Journal. Instead, the essential ingredient is *rapid publication of excellent science across the spectrum of our field*.

However, titles do matter in attracting an audience. This is reflected in the fact that few of us call our courses “Phycology”; instead, we use titles such as “Marine and Freshwater Algae”, “Introduction to the Algae”, or “Phytoplankton”. AlgaeBase is not PhycoBase. Many of the widely used textbooks in phycology did/do not use “phycology” in their titles (e.g., *The Algae and Their Life Relations* [1935], Josephine Tilden; *The Structure and Reproduction of the Algae* [1935, 1945], F. E. Fritsch; *Introduction to the Algae: Structure and Function* [1985], H. C. Bold, M. J. Wynne; *Algae* [2009], L.E.Graham, J. M. Graham, L. W. Wilcox). Another recent text was entitled *Algae: An Introduction to Phycology* (1997, C. van den Hoek, D. G. Mann, H. M. Jahn).

We do want a keen audience for the PSA’s journal, because the reason we publish our research is not for ourselves, but to communicate our findings to other scientists and to advance science as a whole. The question we need to ask in our discussion over the next few weeks is whether our historical *Journal of Phycology* title needs to change to communicate our research better within the greater scientific community. At least two issues are evident: 1) the energy wasted in explaining that phycology is not psychology, and 2) whether “phycology” has become more obscure in ways that hinder us. Our academic institutions have changed since the Journal’s first publication in 1965, when “phycology” was probably more widely understood in the scientific community. A contrary view, ignoring the persistent confusion with psychology, might be that the *Journal of Phycology* has a well-deserved reputation for excellence over 46 years among scientists who know it, which makes it distinctive against newer journals in phycology that have adopted “Algal X” titles.

Our comprehensive focus at the *Journal of Phycology* is part of our best tradition. Through expert peer reviews, the PSA publishes a journal that presents strong, exciting papers about all aspects of the algae and their roles in Nature. The “Information for Contributors” that Luigi Provasoli wrote for Vol. 1, No. 1 has nearly the same wording as that used today (i.e., “*The Journal of Phycology* publishes all aspects of research on algae to provide a common medium for the taxonomist, ecologist, morphologist, cytologist, physiologist and biochemist. The papers are accepted on the basis of their original and meaningful data, and ideas...”. Vol. 1, No. 1, 1965). We must attract the best scientific research on algae to our Journal and grow membership in the Society, especially in this time of keenly exciting discoveries about algae across all areas of science. Our Journal, through strong peer review and editorial oversight, provides a most important service to members and the scientific community:

Research published in our Journal is strongly supported with “original and meaningful data, and ideas”.

We have an outstanding team of Co-Editors who will take office on January 1, 2012 (Michael Graham, Debashish Bhattacharya, Arthur Grossman, Jonathan Zehr). The new Co-Editors are going to help the membership produce an excellent Journal (whatever its name) that will be faster, more comprehensive, and more scientifically stimulating than ever. I emphasize that they will help us, because it is our journal. As they speed publication, and introduce attractive new features, each of us must submit some of our very best papers to the Journal. Because this Journal is the PSA members’ Journal, we *can* ensure that it is the best by how we place our own papers and how we reach out to colleagues working on algae in other fields--- indeed, *only* we can ensure that the PSA’s journal is the most consistent place to find the best research in any area of algal science.

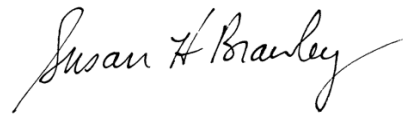
If the membership agrees to change the title, there is advantage in doing so relatively early in 2012 to avoid confusion among library subscribers for 2013, which is why a Second Referendum will occur in a few weeks, after the membership has had time to think and discuss the issues related to a title change. Nearly 70% of our institutional subscribers participate in the Wiley-Blackwell journals’ package, and with Wiley marketing and members’ help for the other 30%, we should weather a title change well. In terms of impact factors, if a title change were made early during 2012, the new title could have a strong impact factor by 2014. One of the *Journal of Phycology*’s indicators of excellence is the long half-life of our articles (i.e., the Journal’s back issues are heavily used by scientists). A new title, of course, would not achieve this metric for a number of years, but the Journal’s reputation for excellence should be evident in the community.

When this discussion last arose in a formal way in the PSA (2001), we added an official subtitle (“International Journal of Algal Research”) to the main title, which you will see on the cover of the *Journal of Phycology* for all issues since February, 2012. That seemed likely to help, because what the Journal was (i.e., a journal about algae) was clearer to browsers in reading rooms...now, however, well-stocked reading rooms have largely disappeared in favor of electronic document retrieval, and the journal title may not continue to serve us well in that context.

Before we have a second referendum (tentatively beginning later in Dec-early Jan), we need to have a strong, public discussion among members on the pros/cons of “phycology” in our Journal title. We have an excellent vehicle to do this: the PSA Facebook site, which can be accessed directly from our homepage at [www.PSAalgae.org](http://www.PSAalgae.org) (**just click on the PSA Facebook icon from our home page. You can read posts without doing anything more, but, if you are not a member of Facebook, in order to comment on a post at PSA Facebook, you will need to sign up for an account from the PSA Facebook page. All that is required is your name and email address, and this won’t sign you up for anything additional on Facebook that you don’t want to be a part of; it will simply let you interact with our PSA page and take part in our discussion. Please contact Amber Bratcher, our PSA Facebook Moderator, at [amber\\_bratcher@umit.maine.edu](mailto:amber_bratcher@umit.maine.edu) for help or questions about PSA Facebook use**). I have already posted some questions on PSA Facebook ([www.PSAalgae.org](http://www.PSAalgae.org)). I hope members will discuss these, and post other questions/comments for discussion in the next few weeks. We’ve observed how effectively Facebook can be used in the world in the last year; we can use it, too, to have a truly important series of conversations about a very important matter.

We are also having a membership campaign, in which we hope to double the Society membership by the end of 2012. Please consider encouraging a colleague or student to join the Society. Our membership is already up nicely from 2010, which makes it as easy as each member recruiting

one more member. The forthcoming PSA meeting in Charleston (June 26-29, 2012, with some activities a few days before and a few days after, details available soon at [www.PSAalgae.org](http://www.PSAalgae.org)) will again offer splendid science and splendid workshops. Happy Holidays and New Year!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan H. Branley". The signature is written in black ink and is centered on the page.

Questions Posted on PSA Facebook for Discussion among Members (please discuss them there):

“Is phycology a negative, neutral, or positive term relative to advancing knowledge and appreciation for the importance of research on algae in the broader scientific community?”

“If the Journal title were changed to include “algae” or “algal”, would it be beneficial to you? Why or why not?”

“Would changing the Journal title to include “algae” or “algal” diminish our historical advantage while still not attracting more manuscripts from “non-phycologists” working on algae, who will still publish their strong manuscripts in journals with names of our sub-fields (e.g., ecology, cell biology)?”