

# When is a journal not a journal?

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Welcome to another issue of the *BC Journal of Ecosystems and Management*, and to my first formal communication to you as Editor-in-Chief. And it's about time. FORREX is finishing its 11th year of operations, and *JEM* will celebrate 10 years of service in 2010. There is no question that relevant, timely, and trustworthy science-based information is critical to transform our resource sectors into economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable entities. But how do we provide people with high-quality information when time and budgets are constrained? Is *JEM* still relevant and can it meet this need? It seems appropriate to reflect on why FORREX first created *JEM*, who is using the journal, and what we plan to achieve in the coming years.

So why did we create *JEM* as an online, open-access, peer-reviewed journal? In 1999, policy and operational clients indicated that journal articles were their least-preferred information vehicle and were least likely to reach key audiences for science-based information.<sup>1</sup> These clients preferred short summaries and field guides. At the same time, our research clients—the main contributors to our publications—indicated they most preferred journals as a means to publish their research results and to learn about the work of other researchers. Both audiences agreed on the need for high-quality, reliable information and, given funding constraints, would prefer web-based products. This presented FORREX with both a conundrum and an opportunity: We had to publish relevant science-based information in a format useful to our clients and we had to do this in a timely, cost-effective manner, but how could we satisfy the need of our policy and operational clients for expert summaries and also provide the journal format desired by our research community? If using a journal as an information source is perceived as a barrier, when is a journal not a journal?

Our solution? FORREX, with funding support through the BC Ministry of Forests and Range and the Provincial Extension Program, designed a web-based, open-access publishing vehicle that included the types of written products most desired by all audiences (research articles, discussion papers, perspectives, and extension notes and summaries). We linked these published products to a larger provincial extension program strategy. We forged new ground in the journal-publishing world by releasing articles before each issue closed. We established and followed a peer-review process to meet academic standards. So, has the fact that *JEM* is a “journal” affected its reach, accessibility, or use?

You be the judge. Each time an issue closes, over 15 000 people download articles from the FORREX website and about 400 people receive print copies. Particularly relevant and timely articles can trigger more than 2000 downloads within the month of publication. Recent *JEM* reader surveys<sup>2</sup> and internal and

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1 Gregory, R. and T. Satterfield. 1999. Southern Interior Forest Extension and Research Partnership client survey. BC Ministry of Forests and Southern Interior Forest Extension and Research Partnership, Victoria, BC and Kamloops, BC. Working Paper No. 40. [www.forrex.org/publications/other/jointpubs/wp40.pdf](http://www.forrex.org/publications/other/jointpubs/wp40.pdf)

2 Schooling, J. 2008. Summary of 2008 *JEM* reader survey results. FORREX Forum for Research and Extension in Natural Resources, Kamloops, BC. Internal report.

external evaluation results<sup>3,4</sup> tell us that readers find *JEM* articles very useful, timely, and relevant to their work. More than 50% of these readers apply what they learn from *JEM* in their decisions. Over the last 9 years, *JEM* has evolved into a tool used by policy and operational practitioners . . . and researchers using *JEM* to share their research know how this information is applied and by whom. However, many British Columbia researchers still prefer to publish their results in other journals perceived as more scholarly. So why is *JEM* considered as a well-received and useful journal by our policy and operational readers, but as less scholarly by researchers? And what should FORREX do about this?

We think the answer lies in providing policy and operational readers with some incentive to help determine what they *need* to know, and then invite the research community to present research results to tackle these priorities. We will still welcome and encourage unsolicited submissions. However, we will now also start to solicit articles that address the following high-priority, emerging natural resource sector issues.

- Managing for changing environments (including climate change), timber value, productivity, markets, and public expectations
- Maintaining functioning forested watersheds, water quality, quantity, and aquatic habitats
- Enabling sustainable resource management and stewardship planning through the adoption of ecosystem management and integrated resource management principles
- Managing landscapes and landscape attributes to mitigate species losses and to maintain viable, reproducing populations of forest- and range-dependent species
- Achieving a balanced social, economic, and environmental portfolio
- Enabling understanding and use of Indigenous knowledge in policy, sustainable forest management, and stewardship planning
- Adapting to the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the mountain pine beetle infestation
- Addressing continuing competency and empowering forestry professionals with timely, relevant, and trustworthy information

So, if you have a pressing information need, research results, an innovative case study, a perspective, or a discussion item that addresses these strategic needs, please contact us and submit your paper to *JEM*. You will have the benefit of knowing that by sharing your knowledge through *JEM*, you will make a difference in the positive and innovative transformation of our resource-based economies and communities.

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<sup>3</sup> Morford, S. and C. Hollstedt. 2007. Revisiting a forest extension strategy for British Columbia: A survey of natural resource practitioners and information providers. BC Ministry of Forests and Range, Research Branch, Victoria, BC. Technical Report No. 042. [www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/pubs/Docs/Tr/Tr042.htm](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/pubs/Docs/Tr/Tr042.htm)

<sup>4</sup> Nexus Consortium Inc. 2007. An evaluation of the Provincial Forest Extension Program. FIA Forest Science Program/BC Ministry of Forests and Range, Victoria, BC Internal Report. [www.fia-fsp.ca/d-PFEPEvaluationRprt-30May07.pdf](http://www.fia-fsp.ca/d-PFEPEvaluationRprt-30May07.pdf)