

Are you planning a Special Issue?

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Overview

The past 2 years have been busy ones for Special Issues at *Pacific Conservation Biology*:

- Volume 24, Issue 3 – Women in conservation science
- Volume 24, Issue 4 – Conservation and restoration in peopled landscapes in Oceania
- Volume 25, Issue 1 – Conservation advocacy

Special Issues bring together relevant papers on important topics, potentially becoming valuable resources for researchers and practitioners. The tight focus of authors, reviewers and editors on a unified topic can lead to insights and interactions that might not occur if the papers were scattered across multiple issues or even multiple journals.

In the case of *Pacific Conservation Biology*, Special Issue editors who are also ‘first time editors’ can ease their task with support from the existing editorial team and the production resources of the publisher to help with everything from a cohesive software environment to handle editorial tasks to author services such as layout and copy-editing. Sometimes Special Issues are invited by the editorial board, but they can also be proposed by individuals or societies. Here are some points to think about if you are thinking of proposing a Special Issue for *Pacific Conservation Biology*.

Coverage

Pacific Conservation Biology is a conservation journal, so whatever theme you propose it should have a biological conservation or management issue. It is acceptable for it to be regional if you want (e.g. wildlife conservation in Oceania – after all, *Pacific Conservation Biology* is a regional journal), but a Special Issue devoted to a regional interest can broaden its appeal if accompanied by an introductory paper highlighting general principles that arise from the specific case study. This should ensure interest for a much wider readership.

Cost

Pacific Conservation Biology has no page charges for standard publications, but authors requiring colour in both hard copy and online are still billed (colour online and black and white in print is free). That can cause tensions with invited contributors, who often are offended if they receive a bill. Be up front from the beginning and tell invited authors that there will be no page charges unless they opt for colour in the hard copy, in which case

they will be billed. Alternatively, budget to pay for colour, perhaps by negotiating with a sponsor. Whatever you decide or negotiate, it is prudent to avoid giving authors unexpected bills. A good approach is to tell authors upfront that the option of colour online and black and white in print is free, but colour in both online and print will be billed.

Open Access

Open Access (OA) is important to many because it ensures that the results of research that is often funded publicly are available freely to all. Others, less altruistically minded, may be swayed by the contested view that OA papers might attract more citations. CSIRO Publishing’s OA policy is available at <http://www.publish.csiro.au/pc/forauthors/openaccess>. In brief, authors may freely post online the accepted Microsoft Word version of their paper (with a link to the final journal DOI). OA for the publisher’s pdf is available for a fee. The special issue editor may select one paper in the issue for free OA publication. That can be on perceived merit or general interest, or perhaps drawn as a lottery. One point to think about if the Special Issue has a sponsor is whether or not the sponsor is willing to meet the OA charges for the whole issue to be covered for the publisher’s PDF files.

Length

A proposal should include an indication of the number of papers proposed – up to 10 will make a solid issue. Within this total there is usually an introductory paper to set the scene and a concluding one to draw the themes together.

Special Issue editors have flexibility over length of individual papers and can allow lengths over the word counts quoted on the journal website if the subject matter requires it. However, they should do this with discretion because authors are often prolix if given the opportunity. If a paper is long because it is badly written, then the authors should cut it.

Timelines

Special Issues operate over a longer timeline than anyone ever realises until they do one. If some authors are inexperienced there may be long time lags, but even experienced authors can overcommit and run into problems.

As a crude guide to timing, allow at least 2 months between submission deadline and receipt of all reviews, then a further 2 months for authors to revise their papers, followed by a further 2 months of editorial to and fro if there are further issues to

resolve. Add another 2 months for copy-editing and layout, 1 month for proofing and then a final month in production. That is approximately 10 months from the deadline for first submissions and assumes smooth sailing. A year is more likely. It is imperative to start early.

One speedy option if the Special Issue is tied to a conference is to require all presenters who hope to publish to submit their papers by the date of the conference. Editors can then sign up reviewers at the conference and push people hard to turn around the first drafts promptly. Lastly, authors who submit early can be reassured that their papers will appear online with a DOI once copyediting and proofing are complete, so early bird authors won't be waiting in frustration to be published.

Editors who hope to have a Special Issue to present at a conference should submit a proposal early so that CSIRO Publishing can assist with setting a timeline to ensure the content is ready in time for the conference. CSIRO Publishing may also be able to help with promotion.

Editors

There is no problem with proposers forming their own editorial team for the special issue – in fact, there are strong arguments for doing so. The Special Issue editorial team knows the subject, the likely authors and good reviewers. The *Pacific Conservation Biology* editorial team will offer support and guidance as requested, but the Special Issue team is in charge.

Possible contributors

The general guideline is that papers should contribute to biodiversity conservation or management in the Pacific, as outlined in the Scope section of the *Pacific Conservation Biology* website (<https://www.publish.csiro.au/pc/forauthors/scope>). Proposers

of a Special Issue should have likely contributors in mind, but thought could be given to inviting authors who will give contrasting views, giving opportunities for Early Career Researchers as well as established researchers, and ensuring a geographic spread in invitees.

ScholarOne

CSIRO Publishing uses ScholarOne software to streamline submission, reviewing and, if papers are accepted, production. If a proposal for a Special Issue is accepted, the Editor-in-Chief at *Pacific Conservation Biology* will provide a quick tutorial in the system so that the guest editors can use the software efficiently, because it is in everyone's interests to take the advantages it offers. In the ScholarOne submission system there are template letters for all stages of the workflow, as well as an Editorial Assistant at CSIRO Publishing to help drive papers through peer review.

Author bonus

An added bonus of publishing a special issue in *Pacific Conservation Biology* is that all the authors will receive perpetual access to the whole issue as a sign of appreciation.

Making a proposal

If you are feeling inspired, the best place to start is an informal approach to the Editor-in-Chief stating the proposed topic, whether or not the Special Issue will be connected to a conference or society, and the lead contact. If the response is positive, a short written proposal of approximately two pages will be invited, covering: title, rationale, timeline (note the details about timing above), list of possible contributions, list of possible contributors, and names and affiliations of guest editors.