

## **History of Australasian Plant Pathology**

The Australian Plant Pathology Society was formed in August 1969, with the first Management Committee located in Adelaide.

For many years previously (from January 1949 to June 1970) Australian plant pathologists published the results of their research and other material in Australian Plant Disease Recorder. In APPS Newsletter (6: 2, 36) John Walker stated that this APDR contained over 1000 articles and notes from pathologists all over Australia. Contributions to APDR were “confidential” and could not be abstracted.

Many plant pathological research papers were also published in journals such as Australian Journal of Agriculture, Australian Journal of Botany, and the Journal of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science or in International Journals such as Transactions of the British Mycological Society, Phytopathology, Plant Disease and Netherlands Journal of Plant Pathology.

In 1972, the Society decided that Australian plant pathologists needed a publication to provide a forum for communication between pathologists separated by the large distances between groups in different States. So in March 1972 Volume 1 Number 1 of [APPS Newsletter](#) was published in a reduced A4 format (282 x 215 mm). The Newsletter published Research Notes, items on new diseases (the beginnings of [Australasian Plant Disease Notes](#)), Presidential Addresses, information on conferences, and News from the Executive, Regional News, Letters to the Editor, Book Reviews, obituaries, lists of post-graduate students and Society financial statements. Many of these items were to be later included in APPS News. Society Secretary Dr Lester Burgess at the University of Sydney was the first editor and the publisher was Standard Publishing House Pty. Ltd. in Sydney. As it was classified as a Newsletter research material could not be cited or abstracted.

In 1974, Dr Geoff Behncken in Brisbane became Editor and the publisher for the next 8 issues was Baskerville Printing and Publishing Co. Pty. Ltd. in Brisbane. In June 1976, under new Editor Peter Merriman in Burnley, the publisher became Research Publications Pty. Ltd. in Victoria

Following the change in name of the Society to [Australasian Plant Pathology Society](#), the title of the Newsletter was changed to [Australasian Plant Pathology](#) in 1978. An Editorial Panel was appointed with Prof A. A (Tony) Holland from Monash University being the inaugural Editor-in-Chief. New Guidelines for Contributors were established and a policy of peer review initiated. So for the first time it was possible to cite publications in the Society journal in the usual way.

In 1984, the reduced A4 format was discontinued and the first issue (Volume 13 Number 1) in the new B5 format (170 x 250 mm) was introduced with Editor-in-Chief Dr Geoff Marks in Melbourne. The issue also featured a newly designed cover and listed members of the Executive, Regional Councillors and Editors of various disciplines. In late 1985, Dr Marks was involved in an accident and his place was taken by Dr Satish Wimalajeewa in Burnley. He continued in this role until the end of 1987.

In 1986, the journal went through another transformation featuring a new blue and white cover (not especially outstanding), a comprehensive set of Notes for Contributors, and a list of Contents on the back cover. This format was now comparable with that of other scientific journals (although “News from the Executive” was still included in Volume 15, 1986). During 1986 the Society entered into a long and successful publishing arrangement with Inkata Press in Melbourne.

At the beginning of 1988, Dr Bob Dodman in Toowoomba was invited to accept the role of Editor-in-Chief of *APP* (from now on he will be just Bob). Bob instituted a few changes to the way manuscripts were handled. Previously manuscripts had been submitted to relevant discipline editors but from the end of 1987 authors were required to send manuscripts for publication to Bob, who then directed them to an appropriate Senior Editor. In this way Bob was able to evenly distribute the workload of Senior Editors and more importantly was able to keep better track of manuscripts and thereby control the content of each issue. The policy of

publishing dates of receipt and acceptance of manuscripts was also introduced and the contents of each Volume were included in the last issue of the year.

Publication was still with Inkata Press and involved Bob being responsible for “the editorial marking up” of hard copies of the final manuscript before it was sent to the publisher. On a personal note Bob very much appreciated the very professional and friendly relationship that he enjoyed with the staff at Inkata Press. It was a sad day in 1992 when after 6 years as publisher Inkata Press was taken over by a major publishing house and the Society was forced to make other arrangements because of a dramatic change in printing costs.

Bob has tried to find information about the gradual transfer of manuscripts from hard copy to electronic files, but has not been very successful. He is almost certain that some manuscripts were handled electronically during the last few issues produced by Inkata Press. In *APP* 22: 1, 1993 the Notes for Contributors specify that at final revision a suitable file should be submitted on disc, but Bob believes that this process actually occurred in the previous year or possibly even earlier. With very limited skills and knowledge of computers and word processing, Bob gradually became familiar with this new technology.

At the beginning of 1992, Inkata Press produced their final issue of *APP* (21: 1, 1992) and of course prior to that there was considerable activity by the Society (and Bob) to decide how the publishing of *APP* should proceed. Arrangements were made to have Dr Bob Richardson in Melbourne publish and print Volume 21 No 2. At the time, Bob Richardson was the publisher of *Plant Protection Quarterly* having taken over its publication from Inkata Press in 1989. It was the initial intention that this would continue but then there came a “quantum leap” for Bob Dodman (see *APPS News* 6: No. 2, 8) when he made the decision to set up his own publishing company (J & B Desktop Publishing Pty. Ltd.) and have the printing and mailing done in Toowoomba. A contract was accepted by the Society and continued until December 2000. With considerable help from Bob Richardson, Bob Dodman purchased his first computer and desktop publishing program (PublishIt) in 1992 and began the steep learning curve of becoming a publisher. He was lucky to get a lot of help from a local publishing company (Panorama Printing) who were very patient in teaching him the many things that he needed to know and thus enable him to publish his first issue of *APP* Volume 22 Number 1 in May 1993. Every effort was made to continue the same format that had been set up in 1986. As part of the contract every quarter Bob also packed, labelled and posted all the copies to members and libraries.

One of the problems that had plagued publication over previous years had been the timely release of each issue and this was continuing to hinder the recognition of *APP* by Abstracting journals. Progress was made on this matter with a more timely release in 1993 and by 1994 all four issues were distributed in the same year. This has been successfully continued with all subsequent publishers.

With the introduction of *APPS News* in 1987, there was a gradual change in the publishing of Society news in *APP* with just occasional book reviews and important obituaries included. During 1998, the content of *APP* was restricted to plant pathology material. All other Society material was then published in *APPS News*.

In 1992 and subsequent years, an index for each Volume was included in the final issue of the year. With the move in 1996 to PageMaker, a more powerful desktop publishing program, it was possible to introduce a more comprehensive indexing system with both subject and author indices added. In 1993 another modification was introduced with a title page, Society officers, journal editors and contents added at the end of the final issue. This made it easier to bind the four issues into a complete volume.

In *APPS News* 7: No. 2 April 1994, Bob sought comment from members on a proposal to include a new section in *APP* called “Disease Notes” with the aim of rapid reporting of new disease findings. Subsequently, in September 1994, guidelines for “Disease Notes or New Records” were published and the first manuscript for this new section was accepted in February 1995. The report was published in the first issue of that year, thus meeting the aim of quick publication of this material. These short publications have gradually increased in popularity to the extent that in December 2006 a new Society publication emerged titled [\*Australasian Plant Disease Notes\*](#). More about that publication will appear separately.

In 1995, a photograph was added to the front cover of each issue to add a little more interest to an otherwise very plain cover. Where possible the photograph was provided by one of the authors in that issue. Colour photographs were rare in *APP* but occasionally an author provided (and paid for) a colour photo where it was necessary to show particular features (e.g. mosaic symptoms caused by a virus).

Bob Dodman completed 11 years as Editor-in-Chief and retired at the end of 1998. Dr Ric Cother, at the Agricultural Institute in Orange, NSW then became the new Editor-in-Chief with Bob continuing to publish and distribute the journal until the end of 2000.

During 2000 the Management Committee (with help from Bob) sought a new publisher. After discussions with Dr Laurie Martinelli (a graduate of the University of Queensland and a Society member for many years) and now employed by CSIRO Publishing it was decided that CSIRO Publishing should be the new publisher.

The first issue of the revamped journal appeared in 2001. The format was changed to reduced A4 (210 by 274 mm) and featured a colour photograph on a newly designed cover. In his Editorial at the beginning of this issue Ric Cother set out a framework for *APP* and urged pathologists to support the journal as it moved into the new era of electronic publication. The reputation of *APP* was now firmly established and the Citation Index and Impact Factor continued to improve. The number of papers published as well as the number of pages in each volume also continued to increase and from about 2004 onwards each volume averaged around 600 pages.

Dr Keith Harrower, Central Queensland University, Rockhampton, Queensland, became Editor-in-Chief during the latter part of 2005 and continued in this role until he was forced to retire in late 2009 due to illness. The Society owes a great debt of gratitude to Keith as it was his vision for *APP* that took its ranking to new heights and made it a truly international journal. During this brief period Keith introduced a major change to the publishing policy of *APP* which led to the development of the new journal [\*Australasian Plant Disease Notes\*](#). It was his belief (and supported by subsequent changes to the Impact Factor for *APP*) that the publication of Disease Notes and New Records in *APP* was contributing to a continued low Impact Factor for *APP*. In *APPS News* in April 2006, he stated that it is extremely rare for these publications to be cited in another publication, thus resulting in a poor Impact Factor of around 0.5 for *APP* from 2002 to 2004. With the new journal *APDN* being handled electronically by CSIRO Publishing the Impact Factor for *APP* rose to 0.59 in 2005 and 0.77 in 2006. Keith also advised that in April 2007, data showed that the web site usage of *APP* had improved. The total number of institutional downloads in 2005 was 22,498 which increased markedly in 2006 to 44,466. It was predicted that there would be in excess of 40,000 downloads in 2007. The forward planning of Keith Harrower led to the remarkable success of both *APP* and *APDN* with significant benefits to the Society. Keith was also very involved in the early planning stages of the transition from CSIRO Publishing to the international publisher Springer in Germany.

When Keith retired from his role as Editor-in-Chief of *APP* due to ill health, Dr Philip O'Brien, Murdoch University, Perth, WA was appointed Editor-in-Chief and has continued in this role since that time.

In 2011, after 10 years with CSIRO Publishing, the Society made another important change to the publisher of *APP*. The International publisher Springer, with a reputation stretching back into the 1800s and with offices worldwide, was engaged to publish all *APPS* publications. With Springer's vast network of subscribers and its publishing expertise, all Society publications are now online and available to all members and subscribers. The Impact Factor has remained at a high level (1.106 in 2018 and a 5 year IF of 1.360) and manuscripts are received from many international contributors. Circulation has increased and this has improved the status of Society publications as well as providing a significant financial benefit to the Society.

For more information about the Australasian Plant Pathology Society and its publications visit [www.appsnet.org](http://www.appsnet.org).