

› Conference proceedings vs. journal papers

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Over the past thirty years, there has been considerable commentary about *Acta Horticulturae* (<https://www.actahort.org/>). Many consider *Acta Horticulturae* to be inferior to scientific journals as it does not have an Impact Factor rating, but publication is a requirement if someone wants to present at an ISHS symposium or congress. *Acta Horticulturae* was designed to be a conference proceedings. While scientists in biological fields may not be very familiar with the difference between conference proceedings and journal papers, the distinction between the two types of publication is common knowledge and widely accepted by researchers in other fields such as engineering and computer science.

The purpose of the two types of papers is quite distinct. Conference proceedings are meant to report and provide a concise written record on what was presented at scientific conferences. They are usually quite short, receive a general review for readability, but are not rigorously peer-reviewed for scientific content. They are seldom rejected because they simply report on what was presented at a meeting.

On the other hand, journal papers are generally longer, report scientific findings on a specific topic and are rigorously reviewed for scientific content. The validity of the findings and/or conclusions of the research are often questioned by the reviewers. Therefore, journal papers can be rejected on scientific grounds by referees and thus, the fact that they are accepted and published holds more weight within scientific communities. In general, only a limited percentage of the manuscripts submitted to journals are published, depending on the rigor of the peer review process.

For further clarification of the differences between conference proceedings and journal papers see: <https://www.differencebetween.com/what-is-the-difference-between-journal-and-conference-paper/> <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/conference-papers/> <https://www.resurchnify.com/blog/article/what-is-the-difference-between-conference-papers-8>

<https://academia.stackexchange.com/questions/18349/difference-between-conference-paper-and-journal-paper>

The International Society for Horticultural Science (ISHS) is a society essentially built upon scientific conferences. The strength of the Society is that it facilitates the hosting of numerous conferences such as symposia and congresses that generally meet at four-year intervals. These conferences provide an opportunity for scientists from around the world to meet and present their work and exchange ideas on a wide range of topics.

The proceedings derived from these conferences (*Acta Horticulturae*) provide written records of what was presented at the conferences and are especially valuable to current scientists who could not attend the meeting as well as to future scientists who may benefit from the work done by colleagues who precede them. Given the purpose of published proceedings, if one argues that meeting proceedings are not worthwhile and that we should only rely on scientific journal papers for communicating research content, then we must question the value of conferences altogether. As members of academia, we must recognize that what we do is not only for the benefit of what we get out of something, but it should also be for the benefit of others.

A quick review of the literature indicates that almost without exception, journal papers provide an in-depth report on research work that has concluded. Conference papers, on the other hand, mostly report on either ongoing research projects or mini-reviews of completed work that has led to observations which might be useful to pursue in future research. To publish either of these types of papers in regular scientific journals usually requires substantial additional research before it can be published. Conference papers often contain data sets that may be valuable within specific contexts but are not substantial enough for publication as scientific journal papers.

In this discussion it is also valuable to remember that ISHS has a different foundation to many other scientific societies such as the American Society for Horticultural Science or other national societies in specific fields of science. Many of the other societies have one or more well-established scientific journals that they manage and have annual meetings of the whole society. Generally, they place less emphasis on topical conferences. Thus,

their emphasis is on publishing in their journals and extensive conference proceedings are of little value because the annual meetings are not topic specific. ISHS has adopted two general content, scientific journals, but its conferences are all organized around specific topics that are addressed at approximately four-yearly intervals. Thus, for ISHS, the emphasis has been on publishing conference proceedings. Ideally, it would be good for ISHS to build up its journals and the ISHS Board is currently investigating strategies for accomplishing that. On the other hand, ISHS continues to recognize the value of its conferences and is one of the few biologically-oriented societies that emphasizes the value of conferences by regularly publishing conference proceedings. This is a good thing, not a bad thing.

ISHS provides a valuable service by maintaining a permanent repository of conference proceedings in the form of *Acta Horticulturae*. Members of the ISHS scientific community have the benefit of regularly being able to attend scientific meetings in their fields of interest in locations all around the world. In this age of information and accountability, it is very important that the members of our Society are able to account for the opportunities to attend these meetings. *Acta Horticulturae* provides a permanent record of these opportunities. While numerous other groups create conference proceedings that contain abstracts, extended abstracts or short papers, these proceedings are often produced on an *ad hoc* basis and are not readily accessible after attending a meeting.

Some people have complained about the general requirement to write a conference paper for *Acta Horticulturae* if their paper is accepted for presentation at a symposium. First of all, I would suggest that this is the wrong way to look at it. It should be viewed as a privilege to present a paper at a symposium and furthermore, if one is asked to present a paper, it is virtually guaranteed that their contribution will be published with very little hassle, compared to writing a journal paper and responding to the referees' comments on multiple occasions. In my personal experience, writing a paper for *Acta Horticulturae* requires about one-tenth of the time compared to writing a paper

for a good journal. There is also much more freedom to express thoughts in conference proceedings than in journal papers.

For those who prefer to write a journal article, based on their presentation at an ISHS symposia, they do have the option to submit their paper to the ISHS scientific journals eJHS (*European Journal of Horticultural Science*, <https://www.ishs.org/ejhs>) or *Fruits - The International Journal of Tropical & Subtropical Horticulture* (<https://www.ishs.org/fruits>). These papers will then go through the normal scientific review process and be subject to acceptance/rejection like a normal journal paper. Authors need only to indicate that the paper was previously presented at a specific symposium.

From our perspective, we as a Society should embrace *Acta Horticulturae* for the role it provides in our Society as a valuable conference proceedings for all horticulturists to benefit from. We should not try to

make it something it was never designed to be. It greatly enhances the value of our symposia by making the information presented more broadly available.

Upon writing this article, myself and the other ISHS Board members have realized that the current rules for submitting papers to *Acta Horticulturae* are very similar to what is expected for submitting regular, peer-reviewed, scientific journal articles, i.e. "Submission of a manuscript implies: that the work described has not been published before (except in form of an abstract or as part of a published lecture, review or thesis); that it is not under consideration for publication elsewhere; that its publication has been approved by all co-authors, if any, as well as - tacitly or explicitly - by the responsible authorities at the institution where the work was carried out."

We believe that these requirements have created some of the confusion that current-

ly exists between *Acta Horticulturae* conference papers and scientific journal papers. Given that the character and purpose of conference papers is different to scientific journal papers, we are proposing to change the stated rules for submitting papers to *Acta Horticulturae* to the following:

"Submission of a manuscript to *Acta Horticulturae* does not preclude aspects of the work that are contained in a proceedings manuscript from being published in a manuscript prepared for a peer-reviewed scientific journal. However, authors must be aware that some scientific journals may have restrictions on publication of material that is very similar to material that has been published in conference proceedings. Publication in *Acta Horticulturae* must be approved by all co-authors, if any, as well as - tacitly or explicitly - by the responsible authorities at the institution where the work was carried out." ●

> About the author



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Ted DeJong is an emeritus professor who worked as a fruit tree crop physiologist in the Department of Plant Sciences at the University of California, Davis, USA, from 1981 to 2016. He had a split appointment in teaching, fundamental and application-oriented research and extension. His research program mainly focused on understanding tree physiology and orchard management factors that control the carbon balance/budgets and productivity of fruit and nut trees. He has co-authored ~300 scientific papers, taught fundamental pomology

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