



About

- esa.org
- Professional society for ecologists and environmental scientists
- Headquarters: Washington, DC, USA

People

- **Dr Sue Silver**
Editor-in-Chief, *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*

Goals

- Respond to reader preferences for more immediate feedback on impact of articles
- Modernize perception of long-standing respected journals
- Improve feedback service to authors

Approach

- Use Altmetric, a modern bibliometric tool with graphical feedback
- Become proactive with marketing messages via social media

Results

- Better and more immediate feedback for authors
- Improved author satisfaction
- Information for editors/publishers on which articles are stimulating the most interest
- Altmetric helps improve communications and relationships with authors
- Authors are able to use the Altmetric data to share with colleagues, peers and supervisors



Dr Sue Silver

Badges give feedback to authors and readers and boost journal's image

The Ecological Society of America (ESA) is the largest professional society for ecologists and environmental scientists in the world. Publishing journals is one of its most important activities. Its portfolio includes *Ecology*, one of the oldest journals on the subject. All ESA journals are high impact, highly respected, and are well known internationally but as ESA celebrates its hundredth year of existence, the society faces new challenges.

Dr Sue Silver is the Editor-in-Chief of ESA's *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, a peer-reviewed journal that is received by all ESA members. She admits the society sometimes struggles with the perception that some of its journals are a little old-fashioned. In response, the society launched a strategic initiative to move the perception of the brand to contemporary and forward-looking. For example, the flagship journal *Ecology* has streamlined its publishing process for more rapid publication. The society has also introduced Open Access publishing models and further innovations are being planned.

The implementation of Altmetric Badges on the ESA journal platform is intended to give readers an immediate graphical measure of an article's impact. "Altmetric adds a bright, cool, modern dimension," says Sue. "We started using Badges on the *Frontiers* web pages in January/February 2014." As of May 2015, six journals in the portfolio now have Altmetric Badges.

Bright, cool and modern

It goes without saying that the ESA strives for excellence in the peer-reviewed content it produces, but it also wants, as Sue puts it "to do this with a high coolness factor." Sue and her team at *Frontiers* looked to Altmetric to provide them with another way of gauging reader interest and article impact. This occurred at a time when the Impact Factor as a metric is "going out of fashion with the younger generation of scientists" when it comes to making a judgement on a journal title and the articles contained therein and researchers are being asked to demonstrate how their work both advances knowledge and benefits society more broadly.

Sue explains, "Frontiers is a different kind of journal from the ESA's other publications, as it includes an international news section, letters, editorials, special series, and a columnist, as well as five or six peer-reviewed scientific papers per issue." It also has a high Impact Factor. Sue says: "We bounce around between second and fifth position in the Environmental Science category and between fifth and sixth position in *Ecology*." Despite this, Sue and her team were looking for a more up-to-date way to measure the impact and reach of their journal.

cont.

ESA: THE NUMBERS

4,493 mentions of **718**
articles Dec 2014–May 2015

33 articles featured in
research highlights Dec 2014–
May 2015

Nearly **4,000** tweets of
their articles Dec 2014–
May 2015 – with 5% of those
coming from Spain

The implementation of the
Altmetric Badges on the ESA
journal platform is part of a
strategic initiative to move the
perception of the brand to
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Altmetric offered an easy way to see indicators of a journal's impact both within academia and in society as a whole. "We see Altmetric as an enhancement, measuring something different and immediate," continues Sue. "There is no waiting two to three years, as you have to do with the Impact Factor, to see what's going on with an article. With Altmetric, within a few days of publication, you can look at uptake so there is almost instant gratification."

Ideal testing ground

Sue saw *Frontiers* as the perfect journal to test the value of the Altmetric Badges because its editorial culture allows for rapid innovation. "It's the kind of journal that can do new things quite quickly, so I was able to make this happen fast," she says. Sue was first introduced to Altmetric during a presentation at an eJournalPress meeting in November 2013. She remembers, "We quickly got permission to do this and had the Badges on the *Frontiers* web pages by the beginning of February 2014."

The Altmetric Badges have seen good uptake since implementation. "Authors are very interested in the Badges, and some – especially the early-career scientists – have said they are very pleased we are doing this. They are happy to be able to see who is talking about their papers, and what is being said."

Proactive communications are a key element of raising the profile of research papers. "We start the ball rolling by tweeting when a paper first comes out," explains Sue. "We've always had press releases for what we call our 'sexier' papers, but now we use the Altmetric data to find out how all our content is doing – two of our highest scores were actually for Letters to the Editor! We're getting numerical feedback to see who is picking up each article – which is of interest to the authors of the papers and also the readers."

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