

Editorial

By Joel Brown, Charles Hart, and Lori Hidingier

Rangelands is the face of the Society for Range Management. For our members, it is the link between science and management that lies at the heart of what makes our society unique. For those outside our membership, it is often the entryway into a complex and rewarding profession. Our challenge, as a Steering Committee, Editor and Editorial Board, and Board of Directors, is to produce a journal that provides high-quality, relevant, and interesting writing about issues that our members use to expand their knowledge and in which the broader public has an interest. It goes without saying that we have to do this in a cost-effective way to ensure that our members, advertisers, and sponsors realize the value of their investment.

Rangelands is expensive to produce. We typically think of the direct publishing costs (typesetting, printing, mailing), and these are indeed substantial. Generally, we figure on a direct cost of \$100/page to publish a full-color, slick paper journal. These are the base costs of the hard copy journal and do not include many of the more complicated agreements between SRM and Allen Press that are common in electronic publishing (distribution, licensing, subscription services, etc.). If we publish six issues a year with 60 pages per issue, that amounts to about a \$36,000 base cost. Our job is to figure out how to develop a funding model that provides a solid financial basis and allows us to print content that will meet member needs and attract new readers. Naturally, funding generated that exceeds that amount allows us to do more. By more, we mean increasing opportunities for the exchange of ideas about rangeland management.

Part of that income comes from member subscriptions. The new dues and subscription structure reflects some of those costs, but relying solely on member subscriptions really limits our ability to produce a quality journal. We would be almost entirely reliant on voluntarily submitted content and the accompanying page charges. While this is often the source of creative and interesting papers in *Rangelands*, it is highly variable, in both quality and quantity. In the past, much of the member-submitted content reflected section activities, committee reports, and society business. A couple of years ago, the Board of Directors decided to move that type of content to the online and hard copy *Rangeland News*, which can deliver it in a much more timely (and cheaper) manner. This decision created more space for content in *Rangelands* to address issues of longer-term and broader

interest. We urge you to look at older issues of *Rangelands*, *Rangeman's Journal*, and even *Journal of Range Management* and see how much of the content was relevant to society business and was out of date before it was published.

Another potential source of income for *Rangelands* is advertising revenue. While it always sounds good to get someone else to pay for something you use, the reality is much less optimistic. If you really think about what rangeland-related products the readers of *Rangelands* are likely to purchase, it is obvious that advertising revenue is unlikely to ever be a significant source of income. Probably the best way to increase the chances for advertising revenue is to increase circulation, both hard copy and online, to ensure that advertisers reach more people. In addition, advertising revenue is extremely responsive to fluctuations in the larger economy and, therefore, represents an unreliable source of income, as evidenced by the struggle of many newspapers and magazines in the last decade.

Most, if not all, scientific and technical journals require authors to pay page charges to publish their writing. *Rangelands* currently charges \$100/page for page charges (for SRM members we offer a discounted rate of \$80/page for the first three pages). By the time you subtract the substantial number of pages in every issue that do not earn page charges (table of contents, cover, required publishing information, Browsing the Literature, *REM* Highlights, letters to the editor, book reviews, etc.), it is easy to see that what we earn in page charges does not cover our base costs. In addition, having the flexibility and financial resources to invite professional authors to address specific topics of broader interest is a great way to get new readers (and members). For instance, "Welcome to the Anthropocene" by William deBuys (30[5]:31–35) was picked up by the *New York Times* and increased our exposure (and Web site visits) by reaching a whole new audience. We must also maintain the ability to waive page charges for our members who do not have the ability to pay them.

Finally, another option for income is via sponsored issues on special topics, like the way this issue is focused on pollinators and rangelands. These have always been a part of *Rangelands* content, but in the last few years we have increased our emphasis on them as a way to bring a variety of perspectives on a single topic to members. These have been some of our most widely read and cited issues. We

currently require \$12,500 to sponsor an issue. This can come from single or multiple sponsors. We allow the sponsor to use their logo and mission statement on an acknowledgment page and to request extra hard copies for their use. Sponsorship does not allow any control of content or editing beyond our usual peer review process. The Steering Committee must approve a special issue proposal that outlines the objectives, paper titles, and authors. Once the papers are written and submitted, they go through the standard peer review process to ensure accuracy, logic, and quality writing. Generally, special issues require an editor or co-editors to organize content, solicit authors and sponsor(s), work with the Editor-in-Chief to manage the submission and review process, and generally make the issue meet quality standards. All of the requirements for special issues are on the *Rangelands* Web site. The entire process takes about 12–18 months between the time a special issue is proposed and when it is published.

Right now, we are planning the following special issues:

- Monitoring and assessment tools, techniques, and databases for rangeland management (August 2011)
- Innovative techniques for teaching about rangelands (Spring 2012).

Additional ideas are under development, and ideas or proposals for sponsored issues are being accepted.

It is also important to remember that special issues may also contain contributed papers that are not necessarily

related to the subject of the special issue. Many of the special issues do not constitute the number of pages to fill an entire issue of the journal, so there is space available.

Rangelands is entirely reliant upon the members of SRM to maintain the quality of the journal. If you want to see specific content in the journal, submit a paper, find a sponsor and organize a special issue, or make suggestions to the Steering Committee. While we cannot guarantee that your paper or idea will be accepted, we can guarantee that it will get the same consideration as that of any other contributor. But, if you don't write it, we can't publish it.

Our objective is to develop a portfolio of contributed articles (with and without page charges), columns, sponsored issues, and advertising that will allow us to maintain a flexible financial position. We want to use that financial basis to meet our goal of consistently publishing a high-quality, informative, and thought-provoking journal that will help SRM members be better practitioners of the science and art of rangeland management. Further, we want to use this journal to demonstrate that competence and relevance to the rest of the world.

Joel Brown is the Chair of the Rangelands Steering Committee, Charles Hart is the SRM Board of Directors Representative for Rangelands, and Lori Hidingier is the Rangelands Editor-in-Chief.