

The Introduction of Article Numbers in Palynology

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EDITORIAL

The introduction of article numbers in *Palynology*

1. Introduction

I am often contacted by authors of accepted papers which have been published online, asking me when their article will be assigned to a volume/issue of the journal and given a page range. When a paper appears in one of the quarterly parts of *Palynology*, this of course is the ultimate iteration, despite the online finalised form being the 'Version of Record'. The paginated version in an issue does appear to be more formal than a typeset and proofread paper with a digital object identifier (doi) number in the 'latest articles' section of our website. These 'unassigned' (an unfortunate term) papers are what used to be termed 'in press' prior to the digital revolution. However in terms of, for example, key metrics such as altmetrics, citations, reads and recommendations, the Version of Record without a volume and page range has exactly the same status as the final, serially paginated, form. Regarding the status of any taxonomic novelties, the publication date of the Version of Record trumps the date of the version assigned to a volume, especially if the years are different. Specifically, if a paper is published online in one year, and allocated to a volume during the following year, certain taxonomic complications may ensue (Riding et al. 2019).

I completely understand the desire of our authors to see their publications appear in their ultimate iteration as soon as is possible. The process of planning and producing a scientific manuscript, and carefully shepherding it through the often convoluted publishing process, is no small undertaking, and often with substantial implications for careers. In order to address this issue, the publishing industry has come up with the concept of article numbering. This is the procedure that, once a typeset paper has been finalised after proofreading, it is simply given a unique number which is an abridged version of its doi number (specifically the last six or seven digits depending on the journal). This is absolutely the final version; no further edits or reformatting are possible. The articles are assigned to a volume/issue immediately, and individually paginated from page one onwards. A major difference, however, is that the part/volume will not have sequential page numbering throughout as before. There is absolutely no need to refer to the number of pages should this article be cited in the future. This means that the only differences in format you will see are on the header for the first page, where the volume, issue and article numbers appear, and the fact that every paper is paginated individually. It is possible that an article will have a different year to the year in which the issue/volume is completed. This is

absolutely unimportant; for example, for taxonomic purposes; it is the year of publication of the paper, not the volume/issue, which is key. In summary, the numbering of journal volumes and parts will remain, but the article numbers will henceforth identify specific papers, and not the page range.

2. Article numbers and *Palynology*

From 2022, i.e. Volume 46 of *Palynology*, we are changing to article numbers in order to avoid potential taxonomic ambiguities, to give better customer service and to help bring the journal up to date with contemporary developments in the industry. This could have happened during 2021, but we felt it would be best if this major change occurred at the beginning of a volume rather than in the middle of it.

The change does not mean that *Palynology* is going paper-free at the moment, nor does it mean we are ditching volume and issue numbers. Furthermore, our annual page budget will be unchanged. Articles will still be assigned to quarterly parts of the journal in chronological order of acceptance. As previously mentioned, this means that a paper can possibly be finalised in one year and assigned to a volume in the next, but the date of publication of the article will not change. To cite a paper with an article number, all you need to do is quote this numeral as opposed to the page range. This is what a citation of a paper in *Palynology* from January 2022 will look like:

Smith, J. and Bloggs, F. 2022. A palynological study of the Random Formation (Upper Ordovician) of the Askaban region, near Hogsmeade, Lilliput. *Palynology* 46(3), 1122334 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/01916122.2022.1122334>).

Note that the inclusion of the full doi number (above in parentheses) is optional, and its inclusion will depend on the journal house style. The journal name, the volume/issue and the article number are sufficient information to unequivocally identify the paper.

3. The benefits of article numbers

Many other journals have found that article numbers are a very effective way to cite articles. Several well-known titles related to palaeontology and palynology have recently moved to this system including *Journal of Vertebrate Paleontology* and *Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology*. Aside of the obvious benefits of having the Version of Record published online and citable a very short time after

the proof checking process, thereby obviating taxonomic timing issues, there are other benefits of moving to article numbers. The editors now have the option of placing articles in any order in the volumes/parts. However, I stress that we do not intend to depart from chronological order in regular issues of *Palynology*, but this strategy could be adopted for Supplements and Thematic Issues in order to align closely related papers.

Reference

Riding JB, Fensome RA, Head MJ. 2019. Citing the taxonomic literature: what a difference a year makes. *Palynology*. 43(1):1–3.

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