Yeater named new Editor-in-Chief of ASA

By Denice Rackley

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Understanding there is competition for content within the scientific community, she believes by ensuring ASA publications present relevant topics that attract the larger scientific community, members will view the Society's journals as their first choice to publish their research.

Kathleen Yeater, an area statistician with USA–ARS, Plains Area, Fort Collins, CO, was recently appointed ASA Editor-in-Chief (EIC). Yeater sees her EIC role as a "conduit of transparent communication between the publications department, our journal editors and editorial boards, and the ASA board of directors" to ensure ASA publications meet and exceed member's needs.

She brings the knowledge gained through previous voluntary roles within the Societies, her varied research experiences, and her love of data to the EIC position.

A winding path led Yeater to a career in agronomy. Growing up on a farm in northwestern Illinois, she didn't follow the traditional FFA or 4-H road, instead she focused on academics, participated in band, cross country, and track during high school. Searching for a career path, Yeater entered the University of Illinois as a chemistry major. During a biology course, genetics caught her attention. While pursuing her interest in genetics, she was attracted to classes related to plant breeding and changed her major to agronomy. While attaining her master's in molecular cytogenetics, she discovered applied statistics. "I enjoyed the idea of using data to answer questions," Yeater says. Her master's adviser, A. Lane Rayburn, recommended exploring a doctoral program applying statistics to genetics.

"At that time, bioinformatics was a very new field with only two programs in the country. I enjoyed research but couldn't envision myself in a lab or conducting field research." Tailoring a doctoral program specifically for her, German Bollero and Don Bullock supported her interest and assisted her work with "big data" before it was even a commonly used term. She graduated with a Ph.D. in biometry and statistics and soon began to work with USDA-ARS.

Delighted with Data

As area statistician for the USDA, Yeater works with data from diverse projects that involve fiber, food, and feed. "I play in everyone else's sandbox," she says. Serving and supporting researchers by setting up unique, intricate experiments to solve their research questions, analyzing and interpreting data, and training others to use statistical procedures is where Yeater shines.

Over the last 20 years, there has been a progressive shift in the scientific community toward researchers and collaborators becoming part of a larger network and placing

data into more accessible repositories. As science organizations transition into the realm of open scientific data, Yeater is assisting research communities in this shift.

Yeater has been active in the Society's support of open access and has served in many positions over the last 15 years.

While serving her second term on the agronomy board of directors during the division realignment, she developed meta-analysis workshops and seminars with then-ASA President Paul Fixen. "Viewing research as a collective whole rather than a stand-alone experiment and realizing that a negative research result has value, leads us to understand that making data available is very valuable. Paul described this as 'data stewardship.' "

Yeater believes the addition of the Biometry and Statistical Computing Section of ASA and offering statistical training has elevated the Societies ahead of the curve when it comes to findable, acceptable, interoperable, and reusable data.

Her service as an Associate Editor of *Agronomy Journal* will also be valuable in her new position. "I have seen what articles are coming in and understand the workload imposed on our editors and peer reviewers. I know the hard work involved in the various steps toward publication to produce an excellent journal."

Ensuring Excellence

Ensuring journal excellence and sustainability are two of Yeater's primary goals.

"Ensuring excellence in the content of journals and book development will elevate our journals and membership," Yeater says.

"Books are an important part of the Society's contribution because books have a longstanding impact. ACSESS has assisted members in publishing over 300 titles." The Societies assist member in writing, reviewing, editing, publishing, and marketing books, points out Richard Easby, Managing Editor of Books for ACSESS. "We have a straightforward process where we accept book proposals, which are then sent to our book committee for approval. We publish 5 to 10 books a year and even assist with children's' books focused on agronomy," Easby says.

With just a week in her new role (as of the writing of this article), Yeater is already at work reviewing potential nominees for ASA's Outstanding Paper Award and helping to identify and appoint a new Editor for *Agronomy Journal.* "David Clay is performing double-duty while he serves as ASA Incoming President and continues with his Editor role. It will be crucial to find a strong, forward-looking leader and team player for our flagship journal."

Yeater is excited to tackle this new role serving members by ensuring excellence and sustainability of the Society's publications. While she freely admits there is much to learn, she says, "I plan to connect with the journal Editors, exploring their ideas to improve and streamline the publication process, making it easier for our volunteers."

Working to maintain ASA at the forefront of advancements, Yeater notes, "I look forward to helping grow the profile of our publications and increase the impacts of our membership science products."

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