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Editorial

The impact of ecological economics

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I am often asked what sort of impact *Ecological Economics* is having in the world. This is a very difficult question since I have very little data, and my response is usually limited to a highly qualitative and personal assessment backed up only with anecdotes. But things do seem to be changing very rapidly, and at least some of the concepts and ideas we have been putting forth in these pages now seem to be relatively well accepted, at least in some circles.

There are, of course, some indicators we can point to. Look at how membership in ISEE and subscriptions to *Ecological Economics* have grown. Look at the number of new books published in ecological economics each year. Look at the attendance at ISEE meetings. Look at the number of regional chapters of ISEE being formed (most recently the Australia/New Zealand chapter and the European chapter). We also are communicating well with the component disciplines that contribute to our transdisciplinary effort. For example, we had a very well-attended session at the Ecological Society of America (ESA) meetings in 1994, resulting in a special issue of *Ecological Applications* due out soon (Costanza and O'Neill, 1996), and there is a session planned at the January 1997 American Economic Association meetings in New Orleans. So, at least at the academic level, *Ecological Economics* seems to be having quite an impact.

But is there any way to quantify this? There is at least one statistic that has been used to rate the academic impact of journals covered by both the Science Citation Index (SCI) and the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI). This 'Impact Factor' (IF) is the total number of citations to a journal divided by the total number of articles in the journal over a given year. In the latest available rankings for 1994, *Ecological Economics* had an IF of 1.313 (up from 0.731 the previous year). This is a very good figure and places *Ecological Economics* high up the list in several different groups. It ranks 16th out of 96 Environmental Science journals, just below *Environment* at 15th (IF = 1.386) and above *Ambio* at 20th (IF = 1.232), *Estuaries* at 39th (IF = 0.793), and *Environmental Management* at 59th (IF = 0.477). When compared with other Ecology journals, *Ecological Economics* ranks 22nd out of 72, just below *Conservation Biology* (IF = 1.643) and *Ecological Applications* (IF = 1.556) and well above *Landscape Ecology* (IF = 0.767), *Ecological Modeling* (IF = 0.683), and *Wetlands* (IF = 0.548). When compared with other Economics journals *Ecological Economics* ranks 19th out of 139, not far behind the *American Economic Review* (IF = 1.657) and almost equal to the *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* (IF = 1.357). It is well above *Land Economics* (IF = 0.744). *Resource and Energy Economics* (IF = 0.476), and the *Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics* (IF = 0.255). If one put all

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the journals in all three of these groups together, *Ecological Economics* would rank 54th out of 344 and it would be the only journal included in all three groups.

These are quite good impact ratings for such a young journal, especially when one considers that the 1994 IFs are based on 1993 data, so we are talking about the IF of three years ago, when the journal was only in its fifth year. Between 1993 and 1994 (using 1992 and 1993 data, respectively) the IF of *Ecological Economics* almost doubled. While this would certainly not happen every year, we can expect the current IF of *Ecological Economics* to be higher than it was in 1993. Also, *Ecological Economics* is one of the few journals that receives a significant number of citations and ranks well as an environmental science journal, as an ecology journal, *and* as an economics journal, a feat few other journals can claim and one that confirms the transdisciplinary status we intended for the journal.

But are these ratings really significant anyway? I think they are for the following reasons. One of our main goals in starting *Ecological Economics* was to provide a forum for transdisciplinary dialogue between ecologists, economists, and others. Both the quality of the papers we receive and the effects of publication on the academic careers of our contributors are related to the perceived quality and impact of the journal. If authors can point to a high IF for *Ecological Economics*, they can receive more academic benefit from publishing here and justify more effort pursuing the transdisciplinary topics we encourage. In the long run, they can be more successful in pursuing a transdisciplinary academic career than if the journal had not been created, and they can encourage more students to take up these formerly academically dangerous topics.

So congratulations are in order for all those who have contributed to this growing impact of *Ecological Economics* – authors, editors, reviewers, subscribers, staff and publishers. Keep up the good work, and if you are having trouble convincing your department chair or section head of the impact of *Ecological Economics*, you now at least have some numbers to point to.

References

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