

The 1970s: New Beginnings for *Soil Survey Horizons*

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The *Soil Survey Horizons* (SSH) Publication Corporation, formed in the early 1960s, continued to publish SSH in Madison, WI throughout the decade. This tax-exempt corporation was sponsored by the North Central Regional Cooperative Soil Survey Workshop, a group that assumed the policy decisions regarding the publication and future of SSH. Francis Hole was editor of SSH from 1959 until 1964, followed by Jim Drew at the University of Nebraska from 1964 to 1970.

Don Franzmeier (Purdue University) became the editor of SSH in 1970, at a time of an expanding national soil survey program. *Soil Survey Horizons* was still considered a regional publication, and it had become “too great a labor of love in spare time” (F.D. Hole, letter dated April 1, 1974) for a small group of scientists to continue. There were 450 subscribers in 1974, and it was felt that, with assistance, SSH could reach a wider audience. It was no great financial success, but “it outlasted some of its main competitors like Saturday Evening Post, Look and Life” (from a letter from SSH Editor Don Franzmeier; December, 1973).

It was proposed to allow the Soil Science Society of America to serve as publisher of SSH, giving it “continuity, stability, and prestige.” Issues concerning this matter at the time involved whether the Soil Conservation Society of America (currently the Soil and Water Conservation Society) should be the group to assume the publication instead of SSSA or whether SSSA Division S-5 (Pedology) should use SSH as an official newsletter. Also, there were concerns that SSSA would control publication policies, resulting in an “ivory tower publication” that no longer served the field soil scientist. It was also felt that SSSA may keep it a while, then use it as a newsletter for a “national association made up of members of state associations of registered soil classifiers.” Yet, SSSA did want to serve the field soil scientist and become a home for their issues. There was support for a field-oriented publication from Charles Kellogg, who commented in a 1973 letter to the editor (SSH, 14(2): 3–4) that “many of the problems discussed (in SSSA Proceedings and other soil journals) are cooked up for the chemical, physical, or statistical laboratory, and not motivated through the diagnosis of problems by users of soils—farmers, engineers, town-and-country planners, and so on.” Kellogg felt that only a few soil scientists tackle problems related to soil use and that U.S. soil scientists should work together to address these applied problems. He concluded by writing that “all of us in soil science need the skills and original ideas of one another about real soils.”

In the summer of 1974, the SSSA Executive Committee

met and decided to print and distribute SSH at a cost basis. In October of that year, a proposal was submitted to SSSA that the Society would serve as publisher, with editors at Society headquarters allowed to review and edit contents of any material to be published. An agreement was reached, although SSH was still owned by the SSH Publication Corporation, which was “responsible for appointing the editors and editorial board, and governs the editorial policy for the publication.”

It was felt that SSH had entered a new era with the arrangement and the 1975 Spring Issue (Vol. 16) was the first published by SSSA. The editorial board was broadened to include Roger Parsons (West), Richard Guthrie (South), Chris Johannsen (North Central), Klaus Flach (National Soil Survey Office), John Ferwerda (Northeast); Don Franzmeier remained as editor. There was a greater emphasis on technical material, but also proposals and updates to *Soil Taxonomy*. There was a plan to work closely with regional conferences of the soil survey to ensure that “SSH serves mainly the interests of the field soil scientists.” About 2000 copies of the initial issue were distributed to SCS State Soil Scientists, Forest Service Soils Branch Chiefs, and subscribers. The initial mailing of complimentary copies to field soil scientists and state university cooperators was made to stimulate interest and solicit new subscribers and authors. As William M. Johnson, SCS Deputy Administrator for Soil Survey, stated in an editorial in that issue, “The fate of *Soil Survey Horizons* now will depend on all of us—on our willingness to part with a few dollars for subscriptions and, more importantly, on our willingness to share our experiences to sit down and write about ourselves and our work.”

It was decided by the SSSA Executive Vice President that SSH required a minimum of 500 subscribers to remain a viable publication. There were only 150 subscribers by the middle of August, but by October this number had increased to 344. It was a time regarded as a “crisis” by Francis Hole in an October 1975 letter. He suggested making an effort to get agricultural colleges to subscribe. The interest was sufficient that SSSA President Chuck Davey approved continuing the publication for 1976 with hopes that continued promotion would enable SSH to gain subscribers and remain solvent.

By the end of 1975, there were 649 subscribers and Ed Ciolkosz (Pennsylvania State University) took over duties as Editor. The relationship with SSSA was successful, but SSH still struggled with subscription numbers and especially obtaining material to include in each issue. Nevertheless, subscriptions increased to 695, 836, and 866 for the years 1976, 1977, and 1978, respectively. *Soil Survey Horizons* finally turned a profit of \$282.55 in 1977 and appeared finally out of the woods as a publication relevant to the field soil scientist.

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