



EDITORIAL

New Journal Policies

My last Editorial (1993, Vol. 15, No. 6) discussed some problems associated with the Journal's expansion in 1993, particularly in the light of concern in the academic community over 'proliferation'. I stated the commitment of all the *Journal of Structural Geology's* Editors to maintain quality, and reported that we were looking at ways to improve our manuscript review procedures. As a result of many exchanges of ideas among the Editors and Editorial Advisory Board, we introduced an optional Review Form/Checklist at the end of 1993. This gives reviewers the opportunity for making a specific response to questions, but we still encourage detailed reports. It is too early to report on whether the form helps to speed up the review process, but it is already helping the Editors to make a decision, and identify weak points in a paper.

In parallel with our recent activities to maintain quality within *JSG*, a wider group of editors of geoscience journals have become motivated by mutual concerns surrounding proliferation in publishing: overlapping papers (sometimes called 'shingling'), duplications, etc. A Round Table was convened by David Fountain, Editor of *Geology*, at the Geological Society of America annual meeting in Boston (October 1993). A working group of six editors, including myself, led specific points of discussion for a meeting of more than 50 editors, with the aim of developing some common policies. Issues such as the overlap of short and long articles, overlap in sets or series of papers, republishing in different languages, modifying internal reports into journal articles, were all discussed. It was agreed that a 'Uniform Statement' of editorial policies might be devised, suitable for use in a wide range of journals. I volunteered to work on such a Statement, with the rationale of clarifying commonly accepted publishing practices, formerly understood as 'publishing etiquette' or publishing ethics.

My proposed **Statement of Editorial and Publication Policies** is printed overleaf. Although tailor-made for *JSG*, it was written with a potentially wider use in mind, along the lines discussed at the Boston Round Table. I have tried to outline standard procedures from submission to publication, while paying attention to the recent concerns surrounding overlapping publications which motivated the editors' initiative.

I propose to use this Statement in the *Journal of Structural Geology*, in two ways. First, from this Number onwards it is incorporated into the final pages of *JSG* issues, together with the *Aims and Scope* and the

Instructions for Contributors. The Instructions have been updated and modified, where appropriate. Secondly, from now on a copy of the Statement will be included with each manuscript acknowledgment letter. If clause 3 is relevant, the author will then become aware of the need to send supporting documents.

I wish to make it clear to contributors and readers that *JSG* has not experienced many problems with publishing etiquette, nor with overlapping publications. Cases of deliberate simultaneous publication are thankfully very rare. However, it is not uncommon to find that a submitted paper refers to other (companion) papers in review or in press with other journals, such that the reviewers are not able to judge the paper properly without access to this additional material. This is the reason for clause 3.

Long papers

A somewhat different aspect of the 'proliferation' debate concerns the length of papers. An analysis of last year's Volume confirmed a trend of increasing average length of published papers. This appears to be the result of a greater proportion of long papers, in excess of our recommended 16 page limit. Our policy has been to accept papers deemed to be well in excess of 16 printed pages, only if the paper is shown (through refereeing) to be of exceptional merit. It might be argued that it is better to accept one long paper on an important topic, than force the author to break the paper into two, with a combined greater length and a degree of overlap. However, a considerable number of recent submissions, estimated to require 20 printed pages or more, appear to have been written in an expansive style, and contain vast quantities of data in figure or tabular form. First papers written out of Ph.D. theses can fall into this category, and this may be the first opportunity an author has to develop the different skills needed in writing a scientific paper from those used in thesis or report writing. However, our recent experience suggests that some experienced authors are developing the habit of writing increasingly long papers. Perhaps current technology in word processing, in making illustrations, and in analytical techniques, are pushing all of us towards a greater output? Or perhaps the pressure to publish as much and as quickly as possible is the cause? It is certainly likely to take longer to write a finely-tuned short paper, in a succinct style and with selective illustrations, than to produce a long unedited version.

The pressure on *JSG* page space, referred to in my previous Editorial, is driving me to adopt even stricter

policies on overly long submissions, this year. The Editors are now returning excessively long papers for reduction, *before* having them reviewed. Such a decision requires an initial editorial judgement that the paper is not sufficiently exceptional to merit special treatment. It might be argued that such a decision should be made with the help of referees; and in some cases it is. However, we are mindful of the work in reviewing papers, and think that reviewers should not be asked to review excessive material which is likely to be condensed during revision. Their task is not primarily to advise authors on 'tightening' their writing style, or on which figures might be omitted.

I certainly have no wish to see *JSG* develop into a Journal which refuses to publish important data, such as detailed structural maps or microstructural data, because of page limits. On the other hand, with the current demand on *JSG's* page space, I think it is important to monitor our contents, assess the balance between short and long papers, and strive to maintain the highest quality. *JSG's* contributors can play the most important part in this process, by considering their papers critically *before* submission. It is not fair play to submit a hasty paper, and assume that reviewers and editor will put it into shape; neither is it fair to submit an ill-prepared manuscript in order to be able to record a submitted article on a grant proposal. Readers might find me

provocative in making such suggestions, but I am simply reporting real cases!

In my quest to reduce the number of excessively long papers submitted to *JSG*, I suggest that authors ask themselves the following questions before submitting a completed manuscript. (1) Have I written the paper in as concise a way as possible? (Have I thought how much space the text and figures will require?) (2) Is all the material relevant to the topic of *this* paper? (3) If someone else had written the paper, would I be interested enough to read it from start to finish? (Or review it?)

If the answers are honest yeses, I would predict the likelihood of a smooth passage through the review and editorial processes. Papers which have been reviewed informally by colleagues before submission, and which have been written with reference to *JSG's Instructions for Contributors* are also likely to suffer less criticism in the review process. The extra care and self-criticism before submission is more than repaid to the authors, by swifter and more positive reviewing and editing, and as a consequence, a more rapid progress into print.

I hope that these new or reinforced policies to maintain standards will meet with the approval of *JSG's* readers and contributors.

Susan H. Treagus

STATEMENT OF EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION POLICIES

1. Manuscripts submitted to this Journal should not have been published, or simultaneously submitted, elsewhere.
2. Submitted manuscripts should largely contain previously unreported material. The overlap of contents between related papers should be the minimum, normally confined to the introductory/review sections.
3. Authors should provide information and preprints on any papers closely related to the submitted paper, which are not yet in the public domain (in review, or in press). If deemed necessary to the review process, these will be copied to reviewers.
4. Authors should consult the Journal's "Instructions for Contributors" (at the end of each Journal issue) for detailed stylistic guidelines, during preparation of their manuscript. Editors may return manuscripts that are grossly inconsistent with these guidelines.
5. Where the submitted manuscript is multi-authored, one individual will need to be the Corresponding Author. It will be assumed that all the authors have been involved in the work, have approved the manuscript, and agree to its submission.
6. The Chief Editor will allocate the submitted manuscript to an (Associate) Editor, to handle the reviewing, revision, and acceptance or rejection procedures.
7. Manuscripts are sent to at least two referees. Reviewers are requested to treat the manuscript confidentially. They may choose to identify themselves, or remain anonymous.
8. The Editor's judgement is final, with regard to suitability for publication.
9. The Publisher carries responsibility for typesetting, page layout and figure sizing, for all accepted papers.
10. Authors are responsible for reading and correcting page proofs of their articles. Proof corrections are normally restricted to typesetting and printing errors. Major changes cannot be undertaken at the proof stage.

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