

Editorial

The chimera of achievement

Antarctic Science is now in its tenth year with the number of pages increasing, its citation rate increasing and the enthusiasm of its editors undimmed! We are grateful to all our contributors, editorial board members and referees for their support which have made the journal what it is. This is a good time to take stock and consider the future.

Has the journal established its reputation? As an editor I clearly have a rather biased view of this. Since we have a flow of good papers, are cited increasingly and are apparently well thought of by our community I felt we were doing well. I was therefore somewhat take aback to hear it described by a senior UK scientist as a second rate journal of limited regional interest. He dismissed the opportunities it offers for an holistic approach, suggested that the clear links between science in the Antarctic and elsewhere could best be served by publishing in narrow disciplinary journals and indicated that the papers it published could not be important since the journal was obviously only of interest to the Antarctic community. You might ask - who is this Philistine? He exists but is also a model for many other scientists to whom any multidisciplinary journal except *Nature* is apparently anathema. Not surprisingly the Editors completely reject these conclusions but advise readers to beware of those (however eminent) with such poverty of thought! The journal will continue to promote interdisciplinary interests wherever possible.

How well are we maintaining standards? The rejection rate is around 40% which we believe allows us to publish the good papers. We provide detailed Instructions for Authors but still too few authors actually read them, leading to increasing editorial work to maintain the standards we set in Volume 1. There is evidence of increasing problems with reviewers. Surely those wanting to publish papers themselves must be prepared to take some part in assessing the papers of others? Too many of the referees we contact now either fail to reply, refuse to review or agree to review but fail to deliver. I am sure all would plead pressure of work but some of these same individuals are in due course incensed if it takes more than a couple of months to get their own papers reviewed. Do you recognise yourself in any of this? Journals can only function with the assistance of the community – more and more people are refusing to play their part in this.

Are we good value for money? Compared to our direct competitors we believe that present subscription rates offer exceptional value for money at both the personal and library rates. With the number of pages per year set to rise to 500–600 there will have to be some increase in rates in due course but we will remain much cheaper than comparable journals in geology, biology and physics. However, with continuing pressure on library budgets there is a need for those with a serious interest in the future of the journal to defend its importance to their library committees – or even take out a personal subscription themselves!

What is the future? We already have special issues booked for this year and next year. We are keeping the possibility of transfer to an electronic format under review. We are always looking for new opportunities to link science fields and promote the broader view. Recently we have published few review papers – who has some suggestions? The glaciologists apparently still feel that they have little to say in a multidisciplinary forum but the climatologists are making an increasing contribution. The biologists remain highly productive! There are still many gaps to bridge, many areas of synthesis unattacked. It is up to you to provide the material for this.

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