



Time to call it a day

Burghard W. Flemming¹

Published online: 7 December 2017
© Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany, part of Springer Nature 2017

After almost 20 years of Geo-Marine Letters editorial work, the current editors Burg W. Flemming and Monique T. Delafontaine have decided to call it a day at the end of 2017. A new editorial team—Karin Bryan (University of Waikato, New Zealand), Andrew Green (University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa) and Gabriele Uenzelmann-Neben (Alfred-Wegener Institute, Bremerhaven, Germany)—are taking over as from January 2018. In due course, they will introduce themselves in a separate editorial. In the meantime, we wish them the same success which we had the privilege of experiencing.

We seize this opportunity to sincerely thank the numerous editorial board members and even more numerous reviewers for their unfailing support of this journal and their efforts of maintaining a high scientific standard of all published articles. In this context it may be of interest to learn that, on average, 50% (range 30–70%) of annually submitted manuscripts have been rejected for a variety of reasons, among them unsuitability for this journal, excessive plagiarism, poor data bases, or inconsistent argumentation. Where the quality of the science warranted it, we took great pains in improving the standard of English to an acceptable international level, a service not all journal editors can claim to be providing. Last but not least, we wish to thank the staff of the responsible editorial office of SpringerNature and the journal production team for their help and professionalism.

After 37 years since its inception in 1981, Geo-Marine Letters (GML) has expanded from initially four issues per year to the current six issues. In spite of this, GML is still a rather small journal in terms of the number of articles (or pages) published annually. Nevertheless, we managed to progressively increase the impact factor (IF) of GML over the years, the IF being 1.716 for 2016 after having hit an all time high of 2.122 in 2014. However, as argued in a previous editorial (Flemming

2012), the IF is a seriously flawed parameter, amongst others because a strong correlation between the size of journals and their IFs continues to persist despite the effort to eliminate this influence through a normalization procedure. The continued high correlation ($R^2 > 0.75$) between the IF and the size of a selection of comparable journals (Flemming 2012) means that at least one other factor, which is also linked to the size of a journal, has a strong influence on the IF—a factor that has evidently not been eliminated. A prime candidate would be that the probability of an article to be cited increases nonlinearly with the size of a journal. Such an influence would be exceedingly difficult to eliminate. In addition, the IF hype has increasingly driven young scientists to publish in high IF journals, the claim that such journals represent higher scientific quality having remained unsubstantiated to this day.

As a consequence, small journals are grossly underrated by the current practice of determining IFs, while larger journals are overrated, the injustice leading the IF (and hence also the IF-based ratings of scientists) *ad absurdum*. A disturbing aspect of this is that intelligent people in national science foundations and other funding organizations, research institute administrations and governmental science ministries either lack critical minds or are simply unwilling to recognize their deeply flawed (and hence unfair) practice in rating scientists (cf. Pendlebury 2009). I am quite convinced that a truly objective IF would show Geo-Marine Letters to be on par with most other, today more highly rated journals of its category.

B.W. Flemming
Retired Editor-in-Chief

References

- Flemming BW (2012) Impact factors: the grand delusion. *Geo-Marine Letters* 32(1):1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00367-011-0272-9>
- Pendlebury DA (2009) The use and misuse of journal metrics and other citation indicators. *Archivum Immunologiae et Therapiae Experimentalis* 57(1):1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00005-009-0008-y>

✉ Burghard W. Flemming
bflemming@senckenberg.de

¹ Marine Research Department, Senckenberg Institute, Suedstrand 40, 26382 Wilhelmshaven, Germany