

Meteoritics - Growth and opportunity

Contrary to Michael Faraday's excellent advice to lecturers, I begin this editorial with an apology. I apologize for breaking my own rules, and instead of concerning myself with the journal contents, discussing the administration of the journal. This issue contains so much of great merit—most notably the Invited Review by Frank Podosek and Pat Cassen and the Antarctic Meteorite tables compiled with great diligence by Jeff Grossman—that I admit to a little shame, and I promise to try to make this editorial an exception.

Half-way through my term as Editor, 12 of the 15 Editors plus 3/4 of the Managerial Board, sat around a very large hotel banqueting table in Vail to consider the progress of our journal. I imagine that the matters for concern were unique for the journal, now in its 40th year. During the first six months of 1993, as many papers were submitted to *Meteoritics* as it had previously received in its busiest 12-month period. This is tremendously good news. It is a testimony to the hard work of all the associate editors, reviewers and many others and to the fact that *Meteoritics* is providing the service that our research community desires. These statistics mean that *Meteoritics* now has unique opportunities to contribute to our collective research endeavor, and we must act carefully to avoid squandering them.

First, starting in 1994 we go to six issues. *Meteoritics* will be published in January, March, May, July, September and November. This automatically means that publication times, already among the shortest in the business, are typically reduced by one month. We will now aim at publishing 75% of acceptable papers in eight months.

Second, we must embark on new and aggressive campaigns to ensure that the journal is placed in even more libraries throughout the world. Not only does this enable us to spread our research results far and wide, but it provides funds for the growth that would otherwise have to come from our members. I am very pleased that Ms. Gail Halleck has joined our team as editorial assistant and, in addition to taking prime responsibility for book reviews, she will devote her efforts to these marketing campaigns.

Third, we must find a more appropriate name for our journal, one which stresses, as does our constitution and our recent award recipients, that our members are interested in most matters concerning the origin and history of the Solar System.

Fourth, and probably most importantly, we must channel our editorial efforts in a way that manages the growth in the best interests of our Science. In short, the Editors recognized in Vail that as the journal grows, they assume greater responsibility to select reviewers carefully, to ensure promptness and professionalism from reviewers, and to ensure that authors use

the comments generated during the review process productively. If all else fails, they have a responsibility not to publish poor-quality material. Once accepted, we must also ensure that the journal enhances our work by highlighting new and novel results and making them accessible to the widest possible readership by editorials and sensible journal organization.

Like most journals published by learned societies, much is expected of *Meteoritics*. It must reflect the whole spectrum of research from major multi-year studies of the broadest kind to short specialized "announcements". Papers describing unexciting data may not attract a call from the *New York Times* science writers, but where would any of us be without such papers, either as authors or readers? The very nature of research means that much of the information we use has been coaxed from Nature, slowly, in small undramatic pieces. Only once in a while are we blessed with an opportunity to assemble the pieces into a *magnus opum* that will become, in the words of a recent eloquently precise reviewer, a "micro-citation classic". Michael Drake's 1985 committee on the future of the journal recognized this and recommended that *Meteoritics* be divided into a number of sections, the major divisions being "Articles" and "Notes". In Vail, the Editors discussed the sectionalization of the journal. We all agreed that it helps, but guidelines and their implications were difficult to come by. We ended up by saying that "Articles" are papers which are broadly focussed and of interest to a broad spectrum of planetary scientists, while "Reports" (which will replace the "Notes") are papers of comparable quality to Articles but narrowly focussed and of interest primarily to specialists. In the future, we will ask reviewers to help us decide in which category a paper should appear. In this way, you can expect *Meteoritics* to contain the most important papers dealing with small-body aspects of planetary science, while continuing to publish the "service papers" our authors and readers need to have published.

Of course, we do not know how successful we will be with any of our endeavors because we seldom know how difficult any task will be. But the growth of *Meteoritics* is an adventure the entire Society wants to succeed. We can only ask for patience and a positive attitude while we try. In the meantime, I promise that my next editorial will not concern journal management but the Science that we are all privileged to share.

Derek Sears
Editor