

Responsibilities of a journal owned by a learned Society

Meteoritics & Planetary Science is owned by the Meteoritical Society and is published without help or hindrance from a commercial publisher. This brings many advantages. I would never have guessed, before becoming Editor, just how supportive our community is of the journal and how much everyone wants it to do well. Every change we make brings a flurry of messages covering a large range of views but sharing a common concern. Then there are the advantages of cost offered by a non-profit journal and these are reflected in the rates we charge libraries. Despite recent increases, the journal continues to be a bargain costing one-fourth to one-fifth the amount of comparable for-profit planetary science and cosmochemistry journals. This has a special significance for those of us who write, review or edit for the journals voluntarily while working at institutions with shrinking library budgets.

However, journals owned by learned Societies have responsibilities that commercial journals do not. There are a great many functions a Society performs—organizing meetings, arbitrating on professional matters (like approving meteorite names), giving awards, and simply maintaining itself—that require communication with the membership and invariably the Society turns to the journal as a vehicle for that communication. Thus, the journal becomes an integral part of Society business as well as being an outlet for original research.

Our journal is not free of these responsibilities. The Society wants many items other than research articles published: the abstracts of its annual meetings, lists of new approved meteorite names, catalogs and inventories of the smaller collections, routine descriptions of undistinguished new meteorites and large summary tables of Antarctic meteorites. Yet at the same time, we all want and need the library holdings of the journal to increase and we want to attract the very best research papers in small body planetary science. The Editorial Board struggles ceaselessly to identify new ways to achieve this.

Last year, the Publications Committee for both the Meteoritical Society and the Geochemical Society recommended that abstracts of a geochemical meeting not be printed in *Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta*, which is owned and published by Pergamon, because it would not appeal to libraries. Both Societies agreed. There was a strong feeling that abstracts, while undoubtedly of the utmost value to researchers, did not belong in a premier research journal. In turning this thought over with the Editorial Board, members of Council, the Publications Committee and others, I soon realized that this was a widespread view and that the same might be said of the Inventories and Catalogs and the routine descriptions of new undistinguished meteorites we publish. There was clearly a need to find a way of meeting the journal's responsibilities to the Society without impeding the growth of the journal. The result was a request from me to the Council that we publish a supplement to *Meteoritics & Planetary Science* in which we could print abstracts, the Meteoritical Bulletin and other catalogs and inventories, and the routine descriptions of new meteorites. They agreed, and I think everybody won. The journal continues on its course of becoming the premier journal in small body planetary science and we continue to meet our responsibilities to the Society that owns the journal. The abstracts are still distributed to libraries and members in an easily citable and attractive form and can be included in the annual indexes. The Meteoritical Bulletin and other catalogs and inventories achieve higher visibility and are more easily located among the ever in-

creasing volumes of back issues on our shelves. Yet we make a clear statement that the journal proper is devoted entirely to propagating the very best research in small body planetary science.

Of course *Meteoritics & Planetary Science* is not alone in choosing this route. Most learned Societies produce two publications. A good example is The Mineralogical Society that publishes *American Mineralogist* and *The Lattice*, or the British Interplanetary Society—whose size and ratio of amateurs to professionals are very similar to the Meteoritical Society's—who publish the *Journal of the British Interplanetary Society* and *Spaceflight*. Incidentally, *Spaceflight* regularly publishes the "Space Digest", which lists all man-made objects launched into space in a form and function somewhat analogous to the way our Meteoritical Bulletin documents the fall of natural objects to Earth. Then there is the American Geophysical Union with its multifaceted *Journal of Geophysical Research* and *EOS*, in which details of its meetings and their abstracts appear.

So here is the abstract issue for this year's meeting of the Meteoritical Society, which is published as a supplement to *Meteoritics & Planetary Science*. It has become an annual practise of mine to use the editorial in this issue to publicly thank all of those who helped assemble the volume and this fact does not make the appreciations any less sincere. It is a huge undertaking, borne mainly by Renéé Dotson and the publications staff at the Lunar and Planetary Institute. Every year they work to the highest standards possible to meet one of the cruelest schedules we could devise. Then there are the crucial roles played by Gail Halleck and Mark Penrose in the *Meteoritics & Planetary Science* office and Dieter Stöffler and the local organizers in Berlin. Most remarkable is not just the devotion and professionalism displayed by these individuals, but that they are all such a pleasure to work with.

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