

Editorial

Godfrey S. Nowlan

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EDITORIAL

In the very first issue of *Geoscience Canada*, published in March 1974, the late W.W. Hutchison, then President of the Geological Association of Canada (GAC), described GAC's goals for the journal. He indicated that it would be broadly based, and topical, and that it would "discuss issues and maintain a poise of responsiveness." At the end of his comments he wished "longue vie à *Geoscience Canada* et bonne chance à son rédacteur." Hutch was President of GAC in the year I joined the Association. In the same year *Geoscience Canada* began publication with Gerry Middleton as Editor. Nearly 30 years on, I am going to accept Hutch's best wishes and try to sustain and improve *Geoscience Canada*, but not without knowing that Gerry Middleton and a line of distinguished former editors are looking over my shoulder. We live in an age when new managers are expected to make radical changes and to discard cherished old ideas. In most organizations it seems to matter little whether or not the changes cause benefit or harm, just so long as changes are made. Let me buck the trend and indicate that I believe that *Geoscience Canada* is generally fulfilling its fundamental goals and needs only minor change. In his original editorial Gerry Middleton wrote:

"The basic policy of this new magazine, published by the Geological Association of Canada, will be to print general-interest articles about the earth sciences in Canada, or about developments in the earth sciences outside Canada, that are likely to be of special interest to Canadians. These articles will be written at a technical level that can be understood not only by specialist research workers but also by non-specialists in other branches of the earth sciences."

Although there have been many new developments in the earth sciences over the last 30 years, the need for communication of new scientific ideas has not changed. It is still true that a clearly written and well-illustrated document is the best way to communicate scientific information, whether it is published on paper or in cyberspace. Therefore, the principal goals of *Geoscience Canada* have changed little. In fact, with the tremendous proliferation of scientific literature over this period, the journal may well have an enhanced role in communicating earth science broadly. The general-interest articles, for which *Geoscience Canada* is justifiably famous, are crucial to helping us all understand new developments in earth sciences, especially those outside our immediate area of expertise.

Over the years, *Geoscience Canada* has been the venue for several series of related articles that ultimately combine into a book. *Facies Models*, edited so ably by Roger Walker and Noel James, is the shining example. We have continuing series on Earth Science Education, Environmental Marine Geoscience, the Geology of Parliament Buildings, and Geology and Wine. I am sure there are other potential series out there and I look forward to hearing from future series editors. The plan is to continue with this form of series.

As part of maintaining a responsive poise, *Geoscience Canada* is also the place to publish articles on issues that confront our profession. For example: the changing demographics of our profession; the need for new educational content and style; the status of Earth Sciences in the overall scientific community; the critical need for us to communicate the ethical and social aspects of our science to the public to make them more responsible citizens of the planet we study. These and many

other issues will be addressed by a Continuing Issues section of the journal. We will welcome short papers on any issues that may arise. So, the journal will continue to present the kind of information that has been *Geoscience Canada's* strength from the very beginning. But it will also evolve.

There is one particular aspect of *Geoscience Canada* about which I have some misgivings: too many of the articles are coaxed and cajoled out of authors either by the Editor or a Series Editor and too few articles are submitted spontaneously. I think many authors see their first priority as getting their new science out to their peer group, and then, maybe, if there is time, writing a general-interest article. Certainly, our community puts much more value on articles in leading journals as a means to the elevated life of a full professor or senior research scientist. However, I would argue that is critically important that the whole community learn to appreciate broader aspects of the earth sciences, especially at a time when we are trying to achieve a more integrated model of earth systems and put an end to the era of strict specialization. If authors want ideas to be widely appreciated they have to provide them in a form that is understandable to a wide audience. As a community of earth scientists we need to foster new ideas and improve their communication to peers and the broader community. Therefore, we plan to introduce a new aspect of *Geoscience Canada* that will encourage short papers on new scientific developments. They will be short contributions (one to four printed pages) that highlight new developments in a field and permit access to the background literature through provision of only key references. This new type of article will be published under the tentative banner of Earth Express, suggest-

ing a sense of rapid delivery and free expression.

In terms of change, we also face the transition to a digital world that means the journal may eventually be on line. However, there are many questions to answer before we head fully in that direction, not the least of which is covering the costs of production of the distributable files. At present the tables of content and abstracts of articles are on the Web at www.gac.org. We will also soon be offering files of articles in PDF-format to authors.

Having been involved with GAC in many capacities over many years, I realize that *Geoscience Canada* is but one of the Association's communication vehicles. I will be looking to try and weave *Geoscience Canada* into the complete fabric of GAC communications. However, I will do none of this alone. I have an active and capable group of Associate Editors and Series Editors (listed on the inside front cover) and I have production help from many quarters. I am pleased to report that Leslie King will remain as the Managing Editor and that Peter Russell will continue to provide illustrations at the head of each article. I am grateful for the support of the Geological Survey of Canada in Calgary and I look forward to presenting the readership with interesting reading. I look forward to hearing from contributors and readers alike.

Finally let me express my admiration for Roger Macqueen who has edited the journal for the last six years. He has taken it to new heights. His shoes are going to be hard to fill: right now, they feel kind of large and loose.

Godfrey S. Nowlan

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