Editorial

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First, I would like to wish all subscribers to, readers of and authors in the *Bulletin of Engineering Geology and the Environment* a Happy New Year. The end of 2012 was a significant point in time for the *Bulletin* because its long-standing Editor-in-Chief, Dr Brian Hawkins retired from the position after 15 years of distinguished service. When Brian became Editor-in-Chief in 1998, the *Bulletin* had a different name (*Bulletin of the International Association of Engineering Geology*), a different look (no photograph on the front cover and no color inside) and was only published twice a year. Brian, with the help and support of the new publisher, Springer-Verlag, changed all that. Now, we have a journal that is much more professional in its presentation, and that has its own citation index impact factor. Authors and readers of papers and the membership of the IAEG owe Brian a big “thank you” for all his efforts. I should also like to thank the Co-Editor, Roger Cojean, who took up his position at the same time as Brian but has agreed to continue in the post for a little while yet.

But time does not stand still. Journal publication is a competitive market and the *Bulletin* must change if it is to continue to make its mark. With this in mind, Springer has rightly insisted that all paper submissions must be made on-line from the *Bulletin*’s web-page. Paper copies no longer need to be sent to the Editor. This change should speed up the review process, but authors should note that this change places a greater obligation on them to produce their papers in English or French of a very high standard. I strongly recommend that, if authors do not have English or French as their first language, they find a native speaker to read and edit their paper. Failing that, authors should use an

English editing service for scientists, such as Edanz, which is recommended by Springer.

I am also proposing to change the way in which papers are reviewed and managed. Previously, the Editor-in-Chief (and/or the Co-Editor) allocated two reviewers and then, after review, made the decision as to whether a particular paper was published or not. With hundreds of papers submitted each year, this is no longer possible as one editor cannot identify hundreds of suitable reviewers. Instead, I am introducing a system that includes Assistant Editors, an Editorial Board and external reviewers. The Assistant Editor responsible for the topic of a paper allocates it to an appropriate member of the Editorial Board who acts as the ‘internal’ reviewer. The Editorial Board member then identifies an ‘external’ reviewer. There are more steps in this system, but it should be easier to identify suitable reviewers. I have begun the process of identifying 6 or 7 Assistant editors and increasing the number of Editorial Board members from the current 11 to more than 30.

Almost inevitably, all this change in a short period of time has had an effect on the speed with which papers are moving through the review system. I apologise for this delay, but ask authors to be patient. I only began working on the *Bulletin* towards the end of last year, and it will take me time to remove the backlog of papers that has built up in the on-line management system. I intend to clear this backlog over the next 2–3 months.

I should like to discuss briefly my view of what engineering geology is and, hence, what the *Bulletin* should aim to cover. The IAEG has defined engineering geology as the science devoted to the investigation, study and solution of engineering and environmental problems that may arise as the result of the interaction between geology and the works or activities of humanity, as well as of the prediction of and development of measures for the

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prevention or remediation of geological hazards. So, engineering geology is much more than simply the application of geology to civil engineering. Further to this, much work has been done by Robert Tepel to answer the question ‘What is engineering geology really all about?’ On page 12 of the December 2012 edition of AEG News, he restated his conclusion that “Engineering geology benefits humanity by discovering, defining, and analyzing geologically-sourced risks or conditions that impact, or might impact, humans as they utilize and interact with their built and natural environments.” In summary, engineering geologists “help people recognize and manage, and make informed decisions about, geologically-sourced risks.” It is in this exciting and broad field that the Bulletin seeks to publish. So, send me your research papers, your case histories, your technical notes, your photographic features and your discussions of other papers and, if they are accepted after review, we shall publish them.

I would like to close by telling you a little about my background. After degrees in geology at the University of Birmingham and engineering geology at the University of Leeds, I joined the Engineering Geology Unit of what is now the British Geological Survey. Apart from a number of years working in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, I remained at the survey until my retirement, ending up as Director of Environment and Hazards. I have been an Assistant Editor of the ‘Quarterly Journal of Engineering Geology and Hydrogeology’ and on the Editorial Boards of ‘Engineering Geology’ and of ‘Georisk’. Currently, I am an Honorary Visiting Professor in Engineering Geology in the School of Civil Engineering at the University of Birmingham and an Honorary Research Associate at the British Geological Survey. Oh, and Editor-in-Chief of the Bulletin of Engineering Geology and the Environment!