Editorial

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The first issue ever of Boundary-layer Meteorology was published 40 years ago this year by D. Reidel of Dordrecht. Ted Munn was the inaugural editor, and was the journal's editor from 1970 to 1995. In 1995 he retired and handed over to myself, then working full-time at CSIRO in Melbourne, and Peter Taylor, then, as now, working at York University, Toronto. This year, with a full schedule of work still at York, Peter has decided to retire as Co-Editor, and we wish him well. Boundary-Layer Meteorology has not lost Peter completely though, since he is still an occasional author and has also joined the Editorial Board.

Much has changed in the 40 years since the journal's first issue. After several publisher mergers and takeovers, BLM is now but one in a huge stable of journals published by Springer. Our journal has changed in content too, and in one area far more than any other—we now regularly publish articles on many aspects of urban meteorology and the urban environment that were rare even 15 years ago. Submissions, invitations to referees, reviews and proofs are all handled now electronically via a dedicated website and, as a result of electronic publication procedures, an article is published, on average, about nine months after initial submission compared to 15 months in the old system. To aid the review process, each article is reviewed by two or three referees usually, compared with only one when we took over 15 years ago. This occasionally creates headaches when reviews are contradictory, but overall both authors and editors are offered a more comprehensive and constructive guidance so far as the revision process is concerned. The final quality of articles is improved as a consequence.

However there is another aspect that has changed significantly, and I believe to the detriment of the scientific process and to the communication of the results of scientific research. I refer to the preparation of manuscripts and to the quality of writing. From my 40 years' experience as a research scientist and author, scientific manager and editor there is little doubt as to the deterioration over the years in both the preparation and writing, even though most authors now prepare their manuscripts electronically rather than in longhand. While I acknowledge that a significant number of manuscripts are still well written, I feel that many authors no longer accept the responsibilities that were, and still are, expected of them. These

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include, (i) ensuring all co-authors have read the final version prior to submission and are happy to “sign off”; (ii) ensuring the layout, style and format of text, equations, figures, etc conform with journal guidelines; (iii) ensuring the English is clear so far as syntax, spelling and grammar are concerned (I am somewhat sympathetic with English grammar subtleties for non-native speakers, partly because they are exposed to so many styles of English). The lack of good writing, which is a common feature in too many submissions, is disappointing and places undue stress and burden on both reviewers and Editor. It also reflects poorly on the authors and co-authors, as my lay friends often point out. They see the results of my copy editing of manuscripts on my study desk—much red ink with requests to authors to rewrite! They are astonished that a scientist spends much time and effort, at a significant cost, on doing the research but too little time on reporting the results clearly and effectively. It is left to others to “pick up the pieces”, i.e. the referees and Editor. I am sure that many authors do not allow their manuscripts to undergo any kind of “internal review”, or do not set the manuscript aside for a short period of time before coming back to it with fresh eyes. The comments that “a manuscript seems to have been prepared in haste”, or “this manuscript has the look of a preliminary draft only”, is all too common in referee reports.

That said, the journal continues to prosper and we have several special issues planned for the next two years. A final word—authors are encouraged to submit formal Comments on any article published in BLM, and whose contents they are in disagreement or feel need augmenting. I feel that Comments and Replies add to our understanding of the underlying science.

With thanks to Peter and to my hardworking Editorial Board.