

**GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON
PUBLICATIONS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

AGENDA for the meeting on 3rd March 2009 in the Council Room at Burlington House.

PRESENT: N. W. Rogers (Chair), A. J. Fleet, N. Macleod, J. D. Marshall, R. J. Pankhurst, R. A. Strachan, J. P. Turner, T. Anderson, H. Floyd-Walker, S. Gibbs, A. Hills, N. Marriott, E. Nickless, S. Oberst, J. Pollitt.

The Chairman noted with sadness the death of Carol Liddle on Friday 28th February. Carol had worked at the Publishing House for 12 years as Production Editor for Geoscientist and designer of marketing and other materials.

Action

1 **Apologies for absence** were received from R. E. Holdsworth, M. Rivett, M. Winter, A. G. Doré and G. E. M. Hall.

2 **Minutes of the last meeting** were agreed and signed.

3 **Matters arising from the last meeting.**

(3) The marketing consultation had been undertaken and the report would be finalised shortly. It would not be for general circulation.

(4) The rumour about GSA starting its own citation index appeared to be unfounded.

(6) Neal Marriott had written an article for Geoscientist.

(7) The JGS Development plan had been approved by Council. The QJEGH plan would be finished later in the year. MW

4 **Publishing House report.** Paper PMC/01/09 had been circulated.

Neal Marriott thanked all the Publishing House staff, who had worked hard with a great deal of focus throughout the year.

An appointment had been made to cover Alison Tucker's maternity leave, and Samantha Kaye would join the Society on 16th March.

Neal Marriott noted that the management and development of the Lyell Collection takes up an increasing amount of time, and will continue to do so.

Putting Society titles in Google books had been a speculative project, but there had been a rapid rise in usage and links through to the Online Bookshop and Amazon. It was thought that it would make a difference to sales, albeit modest.

Edmund Nickless pointed out that our income from GSW was not directly related to the number of subscription, but was based on the amount of content and usage of that content. In 2008 the Society received about £60k and a similar receipt was likely for 2009. In addition to income GSW provides the Society with greatly increased exposure, especially in North America.

It was noted that some publishers have put their prices up to compensate for falling subscriptions. However, the feeling was that the market will not bear large increases.

The Treasurer congratulated the Publishing House staff on a financially successful year, in spite of the difficulties earlier on.

5 **Annual reports** for the journals and books had been circulated as paper PMC/02/09.

5a **JGS.** The report showed that JGS was in a healthy state, and already implementing the development plan.

Citation rates of previous thematic sets had been variable – some which were outside the main scope of the journal had very low citations. This would be borne in mind with future sets.

5b **QJEGH.** This report showed that QJEGH was also in a healthy position.

It had been noted that JGS Subject Editors get free books at the end of each year, but no such benefit was offered to QJEGH editors. It was agreed to consider this.

HFW/
NM

5c **PG.** The journal continues to have copyflow issues, and is surviving on thematic sets. There had been no authors or articles from North America, but it was hope the editor's recent move to Houston might have a positive effect in that respect. It was also hoped that inclusion in GSW would raise the profile of the journal across the Atlantic.

It was suggested that the focus on PGC7 might have a detrimental effect on PG submissions, and also the current climate with low oil prices.

QJEGH had experience similar problems a few years ago, but had turned things around by appointing new board members.

It would be raised at the PG Management Board in April.

EN/
AJF

5d **GEEA.** The editor was very efficient in getting in papers, including a lot of thematic sets. She was beginning to use guest editors to lighten the load.

5e **Contract publishing.** The copyflow of *Journal of Micropalaeontology* was steadily increasing since the change in editor. There were succession plans for a new editor in the near future.

It had been the last year for *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association*, which is now published by Elsevier. The final two issues had been combined in order to clear all the remaining papers we had in the system.

Proceedings of the Yorkshire Geological Society had been healthy, but there are copyflow issues for this year. A meeting was planned with the editor to discuss this and other issues.

Scottish Journal of Geology also continues to experience copyflow problems, but one of the editors brings in a lot of papers from BGS that keep the journal afloat.

5f **Geology Today.** Wiley-Blackwell continue to do a very good job with the magazine, and continue to deliver a surplus in excess of the contractual minimum.

- 5g **GSL Books.** This was the first year that such a report has been produced. It will become more useful and interesting as most of the books are handled by online submission. 2008 had been a good year.
- 6 **North American market potential.** Neal Marriott presented details on a recent marketing research exercise. This will be circulated to the Committee shortly after the meeting. NM
- It was suggested that a summary of this was presented to the EAGE Board meeting in April. NM
- North America represents about 60% of the global spending on research publications.
- 7 **Development of the Lyell Collection.** Paper PMC/03/09 had been circulated. The Lyell Collection would be a legacy for the Bicentenary, but it continued to grow at about 10,000 pages per year.
- Technological development*
- There are continual developments in electronic publication technology, and the Society needs to keep abreast of these. HighWirePress (HWP), the online host for Society content, are launching a new platform known as H2O. A short video outlining this platform was played, followed by a demonstration of a journal (not GSL) already using it.
- There would be no cost implication of using that platform, but there might be an effect on Publishing House workloads. To make best use of the improved functionality specific training and staff resource will be required - some of the options would not be feasible with the current staffing levels. It was noted that HWP provide extensive support for smaller (especially not-for-profit) publishers and, as such, provide very good value for money.
- HWP were heavily biased towards Biomedical Sciences, and those scientists might have a different way of using more material. HWP were certainly tuned in to the next generation of scientists.
- Content development*
- This can be achieved by capturing new content and/or developing what we already have. There is still some current Society and co-published content to go in. Finding other content that is not already hosted elsewhere is challenging. The Society should be wary of taking on too much regionally narrow content, as that might make the Lyell Collection look parochial. There had been some preliminary discussion with the Mineralogical Society.
- One of the main attractions to librarians was the Special Publications series, and there is some concern about the future of that series (next item), and this could potentially have an adverse effect on Lyell Collection subscriptions.
- Nick Rogers said that the Society had made the right decision to launch the Lyell Collection and to join GeoScienceWorld.
- 8 **The future of Special Publications.** Paper PMC/04/09 had been circulated. Previous calculations had shown that the Society needs to publish about 20 books per year to break even. In 2008 only 15 book proposals were accepted, and if this trend continues, the Society will find itself with a shortfall.

The main reason for the falling number of SP proposals is believed to be their lack of Impact Factor, and there is little the Society can do to change that. The series is widely perceived to be high quality, but many authors are required by their institutions to publish only in high IF journals.

There is also a rising concern in the author community that publishing in a book is a slow option – the whole set moves at the speed of the slowest paper, and some editors are especially inefficient. The Society can help to overcome this perception by ensuring that editors are kept to deadlines and keeping production turnaround times low. In the medium term, the Society should consider publishing papers in books (and journals) as they are ready, rather than waiting for the whole volume/issue to be complete – a process known as “continuous publication”.

There is an immediate problem in that there are more than enough books for the next two years, and there has been a bulge towards the end of the year for about 4 years. Not only does that mean that some books are delayed at the start of the production process, it also means that progress chasing is scaled down for several months to avoid making the bulge bigger.

The committee noted the extra workloads to which the Publishing House is now subject following the launch and continuing development of the Lyell Collection. One possible solution might be to take on extra staff although given the current financial climate, the committee was reminded that the Society is not in a position to take on such staff at present or in the foreseeable future. The Director of Publishing and the Publications Secretary will raise this issue at the next Management and Finance Committee meeting. NM/
NWR

There are also concerns in some quarters that the series is becoming too diverse. Moving to a subscription only model would not be attractive to some librarians, and some authors feel their paper would be buried. In other quarters the diversification is welcomed. It seems likely that our core subject areas are the ones most likely to be affected by lack of IF.

Although Society meetings have not been the main source of Special Publications for some years, there has been a reduction in the number of such meetings leading to Society books. It may be time to revisit the process of accepting a meeting through to the final publication outcome, to see if there is anything that can be done to maximise the chance of a meeting resulting in a book.

It was suggested that a ‘Strategy Group’ be formed to look at the future of the Special Publications, including the relationship with Society meetings. Special Publications have been the core of what the Society publishes and they are too important to let them slip away. NM

There should also be a consideration of the more fundamental issue of Society funding. EN/
NWR

- 9 **Any other business.** Nick Rogers asked the committee if they felt that £10 was an appropriate extra charge for Fellows to get print copies once the journals moved to electronic only as the default. It was agreed that it was. NWR/
EN

Nick also announced that it would be his last meeting as Publication Secretary of the Society, and that he would be replaced by Jonathan Turner.

He said it had been a pleasure to act as steward of Society publications and he thanked the Committee and the staff at the Publishing House for their support.

The Committee thanked Nick for his efforts and commitment over the past 4 years.

- 10 **Dates of future meetings** will be 8th July 2009, 26th November 2009 and 3rd March 2010. It is likely that the July meeting will be conducted by e-mail. Please wait for confirmation nearer the time before booking travel tickets.