The state of the *Journal*

As this is the last issue of the present volume some of the progress made with the *Journal* following the magnificent augean task completed by my predecessor, Dr W. W. Bishop, is summarized.

Priority has been given to ensuring that the *Journal* is dispatched regularly on time so that Fellows in the British Isles receive it near to or even before the first day of the nominal month of issue. This has resulted in most Fellows in North America, even those on the west coast, receiving their *Journal* within the month of nominal issue. Many Fellows have noted that their institutional libraries do not receive the *Journal* so promptly and investigations into this reveal that this is mainly because many institutions do not renew their subscriptions until several months after the New Year; a situation that can only be remedied by prompter action by subscribers.

At the same time, great effort has been made within the available limited finance to reduce the backlog of papers awaiting publication. After the May issue of this year all papers have been, and will be, published within a year of receipt of the revised manuscript, except for one paper whose author made changes in the figures two months after submitting the revised version. The last paper *originally* submitted in 1971 appears in this issue; the last paper *originally* submitted in 1972 will appear in the March 1974 issue. Short papers can now be guaranteed publication within six months or even less if urgent and important, long papers in about eight to ten months providing the author revises reasonably promptly. Moreover, procedures have been adopted that will hopefully enable the *Journal* to hold these publication delays even when an unusually large wave of papers is submitted. Delays with refereeing have been markedly reduced so that papers are generally accepted or rejected within 7 weeks of submission, excluding the summer period. These delays are certainly competitive with those of any other Earth Science Journal that adopts stringent refereeing and publication standards.

Although the *Journal* will still publish the important long paper, including descriptions of areas, our normal maximum of 24 printed pages including all figures and references (equivalent to about 30 pages of double spaced typescript plus an average number of figures) is being more firmly adhered to so that greater variety can be incorporated into each issue of the *Journal*. The scope of the *Journal* is intended to be very broad and is limited only by what is submitted, in particular more geophysical and marine geological studies will be welcomed; review articles are not excluded. It needs to be emphasized, as many Fellows do not realize, that papers do not have to be read before the Society if the author so chooses, nor must authors be Fellows of the Society, though the new Meeting Room, practically complete at the time of writing, should make effective presentation of papers easier than in the past.

The enormous costs of present day publication have caused stringent economies to be made wherever possible and our publisher’s advice has been invaluable in this sisyphian exercise. Each page of the *Journal* costs nearly £25 and authors must be succinct. Ziman’s aphorism that ‘not only is there too much scientific
work being published; there is much too much of it' is so true that loquacious verbosity is intrinsically unacceptable in scientific communication, not least to those whose native language is not English. Few authors appreciate the high cost of art plates and fold-outs arising from the necessity of manually inserting each individual item into every single one of over 5000 copies of the Journal and these illustrations have been subjected to particularly rigorous scrutiny. There is a growing tendency to submit illustrations that show little that is novel or critical and to include trivial or scenic material. In order to contain rising costs figures will be reduced more than in the past where sometimes lavish treatment has been allowed and more figures will be combined in order to reduce block-making costs. Among other methods of reducing publication costs recently considered, but not accepted, is side-stabbing the Journal with wire rather than conventional stitch binding. This not only prevents an issue lying flat when opened, with the reader having to hold the pages to prevent closure, but in addition it makes it difficult to run large figures across two facing pages, a device that can often avoid a fold-out that would cost more than the saving from side-stabbing. Double-column printing has also been considered with its advantage of packing more words into each printed page but as the main costs of publishing the Journal are composing, printing, binding and postage, the relatively small saving on text-paper does not at present justify such a change but this is being kept under review, as are other expedients. The Society expects to spend over £40,000 on publications during 1973, a sum that greatly exceeds Fellows' subscriptions, so that a major part of the Society's finance is being devoted to geological publication.

The Editor particularly wishes to know of suggestions for improving the Journal. Perceptive readers will have noted some small changes in style from dispensing with the formal heading 'Introduction' to giving the full names of the authors only at the end of the paper. Authors need not now be so patient as the one who recently wrote to the Editor asking if he could add a paragraph to his paper, submitted as he thought, six years ago; a decade's wait is not necessary but posting the typescript to the Editor still is, as subsequent letters elucidated.

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