



Editorial

A new editorial policy for *Comptes rendus Geoscience*[☆]

With the impact factor having risen to 1.7, *Comptes rendus Geoscience* ranks as a prominent international journal for geosciences. Of all the *Comptes rendus* sections of the French Academy of Sciences, it is the one that ranks best. According to *SCImago Journals*, it ranks 25th out of 226 titles in Earth and planetary sciences. *Comptes rendus Geoscience* is referenced in all international publication databases and offers a means to quick publication of high-level scientific works in *all* domains of Earth sciences, the solid Earth as well as its fluid envelopes (that is, from inner core to atmosphere and ocean). It benefits from global visibility of its electronic version on *ScienceDirect*. We are thankful to the previous editorial team and authors of papers for having contributed to this situation. It is a first step in an ever-ongoing process that we now intend to pursue, in order to increase the journal prominence, to better serve science and the community of geoscientists. To succeed in our endeavor, we propose to organize the journal with three major goals in mind:

- to encourage even better quality and more innovative science;
- to promote a simpler review process;
- to ensure very rapid publication.

Our primary objective is that *Comptes rendus Geoscience* should publish truly original papers and not “average” ones, of the kind that have been termed “not even wrong”. Even outstanding journals now publish such non-outstanding papers. We wish instead to encourage innovative work, thought-provoking papers that may generate debate, also papers arising from earlier career scientists.

An important experiment that we undertake is that authors have their papers reviewed *prior* to submission, a process we call *pre-submission*. The corresponding author (hereafter simply referred to as “the author”) will first contact an associate editor with a title, an abstract and the names of four potential reviewers (but *NOT* a full paper).

These reviewers must have been contacted by the author and must have indicated their willingness to review it, if pre-submission of the paper is accepted. The editor (or associate editor) will quickly ensure that the subject and the choice of reviewers are appropriate (in the case where the associate editor does not feel able to accept two reviewers from the list proposed by the author, she/he will communicate with the author to find suitable replacements). In the case when this is positive, the editor will inform the author that the pre-submission is accepted and will indicate the names of the reviewers who are to be contacted by the author for a review of the full paper. The author will then submit the full paper directly to these reviewers (who will also receive confirmation from the editorial office). The reviewers are to send their reviews directly to the author. The author will then decide whether to revise the paper as a function of the reviews, and finally send the paper (both original version submitted to the reviewers and version finally submitted to the Journal, with all changes clearly marked), together with the reviews and a letter explaining how they have been dealt with, to *Comptes rendus Geoscience*. Evidently, the reviews and responses will have to be soundly argued. The names of the reviewers will be published (in an acknowledgement from the editor) if the paper is accepted. The editorial team may, of course, contact directly and confidentially the reviewers (and vice versa) for additional information. The final manuscript and rebuttal will be sent to the reviewers for reference.

The previous submission system had authors listing potential reviewers and reviewers they wished to avoid. There was no clear guarantee that there would be no ethical conflict between the choices of reviewers and the authors. In the new system, reviewers are proposed by the authors, but have to be accepted by the editors. Since their names will be published, reviewers commit themselves (a guarantee of quality), without endorsing the final paper; the decision to accept the paper and therefore publish it remains with the editor, and the paper itself is the authors' responsibility. The choice of reviewers will follow a code of good practice: colleagues having published with the author(s) in the previous five years, or having participated

[☆] Please go to the website of *Comptes rendus Geoscience*: <http://ees.elsevier.com/geoscience/>.

or planning to participate in a significant joint research project or proposal, or working in the same department would not be qualified. We expect that authors will carefully avoid suggesting the names of inappropriate reviewers.

Upon receiving the papers and the reviews, the associate editor, together with the editorial team when needed, will decide on accepting or rejecting the paper in less than a month. The decision will generally be either acceptance with no or minor revision, or rejection (but with no option for major revision—major revision will be treated as rejection, in order to allow authors to resubmit later if they wish to do so). Papers may be rejected by the editorial team on the sole basis of their lack of interest, originality, or because they are out of the scope of *Comptes Rendus Geoscience*.

This process should both ensure the authors' responsibility and speed up the production of the papers. It is expected that a paper will be published less than a month after acceptance. Hence, the delay between receiving the paper (with all needed documents) at the editorial office and seeing it in final print should be no more than two months, and eventually, hopefully, much less.

In order to succeed in attaining these ambitious goals for *Comptes Rendus Geoscience*, we have assembled a compact team of associate editors that covers as broad a range of disciplines of geosciences as possible (please note that paleontological matters are mainly treated in another journal: *Comptes rendus Palevol*). When needed, editors will work on a paper as a team, possibly asking for advice from an external invited associate editor or reviewer. Together with the associate editors, the chief editor's role will be to guarantee the quality and impartiality of reviewers, to encourage debate whenever it is warranted, and to avoid that articles be barred for "school of thought" or dogmatic reasons.

In the first six months of 2011, taken as a reference period, *Comptes Rendus Geoscience* published 39 papers, the shortest five pages long, the longest 22 pages, the mean being around 10 pages. We will set the upper limit at 10 pages, without or with little resort to supplementary material (base data and observations may be necessary in some cases that will need to be justified). We are opposed to the trend of increasing supplementary material that is neither as well reviewed nor as valuable as the main paper and which promotes unfair competition of journals imposing short articles with journals allowing

long articles. We will continue to have *Special (or thematic) issues* (several per year) on a given theme with a guest editor, and the editorial team will invite some "Frontier" type papers, as well as some synthetic *Review* papers on specific questions. These will be directly managed by two associate editors, whose names will be published along with the paper. Also, *Comments* and *Replies* will be an opportunity (going through the same review/submission process).

Papers must be submitted in English, as has already been the case for some time. The authors will be asked to check the quality/understandability of the text prior to submission. The extended summary and figure captions in French are no longer needed. The French language will be exceptional (again, as has already been the case for some time) and papers submitted in French will have to include an abridged English version of one printed page, referring to the major illustrations and references in the French text. This option will be reserved for outstanding papers whose authors have demonstrable difficulty in providing an English version of their paper.

The use of color will be limited to the electronic online version of the paper to reduce costs. All figures should be readable when printed in black and white or grey tones. Authors are strongly encouraged to propose high quality original photographs for use as cover of the journal.

In summary, papers submitted to *Comptes Rendus Geoscience* will benefit from high quality, fair evaluation and will be published very rapidly. This should contribute to still improve markedly the visibility of the journal and attract more high quality papers, more authors and more readers; in short, to serve better the community of geoscientists and users of the science they produce.

Note: The new editorial team takes office on January 1st 2013. However, of course, papers appearing in this issue and in several of the forthcoming issues will have been managed by the previous editorial team, as will be in general indicated.

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