

EDITORIAL

Should auld acquaintance be forgot? Comment on “Farewell, *HSJ*!—address from the retiring editor” by Z.W. Kundzewicz

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In his Farewell Editorial, Z.W. (Zbyszek) Kundzewicz (2015) provides a fascinating read, useful for older and younger hydrologists alike. It covers the history of *Hydrological Sciences Journal (HSJ)*, official organ of the International Association of Hydrological Sciences (IAHS), not only during his long-lasting (18 years) service as Editor, but also in earlier times since its first issue was published in 1956. It focuses on the evolution of journal publications and the community behaviours during the last decades and also envisages the future of the journal based on past experience and lessons learned.

The period in which Zbyszek led *HSJ* was a transition and transformation period. From an era when the entire processing in the journal was based on postal services, *HSJ* moved to an intermediate period of email-based transactions and, more recently, has adapted to fully web-based processing. From the in-house publishing of a few issues per year it passed to the era of highly professional on-line and in-print publishing, in partnership with a commercial publisher (Taylor & Francis). From the early era when sometimes the submissions were not enough to fill the planned number of issues (4 per year), *HSJ* passed to a period of skyrocketing increase in the number of submissions, which demanded regular expansion of the journal to deal with the backlog of approved papers (this year 16 issues are planned).

These changes were driven by technological evolution in communication and printing, as well as by changes in community habits and behaviours—particularly the dominance in recent years of the “publish-or-perish” syndrome, or the importance given by individuals and institutions to bibliometric indices. Such developments indicate progress and show that the overall body of knowledge has increased dramatically (Blöschl *et al.* 2014). However, one should not neglect the negative consequences, the domination of quantity over quality and the preference for citation counts over

the essential impact of publications. As aptly expressed by Zbyszek, “A cynic may say that, these days, publications are not to be read, they are to be cited, to boost authors’ careers.”

It is also true that bibliometric indices “may grow in time, even after the death of the author (then such growth does not include self-citations)”, as also noted by Zbyszek. In addition to the fine joke, this note offers an important message that an individual’s scientific contribution may continue after his death. Contribution and recognition are tightly connected, sometimes with a time lag, and it is not uncommon that a scientist has been recognized after death (a well-known example is the geophysicist Alfred Wegener). The reasons for this are many, among which are the reluctance of the scientific community to accept new ideas and the impact of competition which undermines the recognition by close individuals—and death definitely removes closeness and often resolves competition. Quoting Max Planck, “A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.” A positive reading of this is that real contributions in science offer immortality; like physical sons and daughters, scientific publications continue life after one’s death.

Such contributions are typically quantified by the evolving bibliometric indices but, as highlighted by the title of this article, inspired by traditional Scottish lyrics, recognition and reputation in science keep following some ways other than bibliometrics. Zbyszek knows this very well himself, from receiving the first ever Tison Award for young hydrologists to chairing the jury of this award over several years, or inviting key relevant and committed individuals onto the editorial board and to the pool of reviewers of *HSJ*.

During Zbyszek’s term as *HSJ* Editor, the development of modern technological means has spectacularly accelerated

publication procedures and dissemination of articles. However, there may not have been substantial progress in the community ethics, except perhaps in the improvement in transparency and the reduction of plagiarism, again supported by modern technological means. Rather, there are symptoms of regression, or pathologies, which are discussed in Zbyszek's editorial, including those quoted above. What can the modern scientific community do to improve such a situation? Certainly we need to heal pathologies. We should urge scientists to write articles only when they have something new and important to say and make these articles appropriate for reading, or not produce them at all. Citations are always welcome, but it should be clear to the community that the purpose of writing articles is to communicate ideas and scientific results rather than to award authors by citations *per se*. In the long run, a poor article, even if it brings some citations in the beginning, will sink into oblivion.

An Editor's role is most crucial for the remedy of pathologies and the improvement of ethics—or the worsening thereof, in the case of failure. Zbyszek's career as *HSJ* Editor was a real success in all aspects, which makes him a role model for his successors and beyond. Indeed, he was very effective in pinpointing innovative—often controversial—papers, to which the peer review system can be hostile. By putting a lot of effort and time into reading the papers himself, Zbyszek was able to release and publish good controversial papers that were trapped in the review process (some interesting stories are contained in his article). He established a fair-play, transparent, objective, ethical and scientific style in the journal. For example, while, as a member of the inner circle of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), he supported climate “orthodoxy”, he made the journal open to different ideas and debate between orthodox and sceptical or heretical views. In this way, *HSJ* has become the strongest and most respectful

vehicle of climate-hydrology dialogue, where both IPCC findings related to hydrology and critiques on them have been published.

Zbyszek has set a record of longevity as Editor of *HSJ*, which we believe will never be broken. He also supported *HSJ* as an author by publishing his high-quality papers in the Journal, thus achieving a record h-index for his *HSJ* publications alone (18 in the time of publication, which has grown to 20 by now). This is one of the many reflections of his loyalty to *HSJ* and IAHS. We, as *HSJ* Co-Editors, IAHS Officers and, above all, hydrologists, owe Zbyszek beyond measure. With his enormous dedication, hard work and integrity he has greatly served the world-wide community of hydrologists. Besides that, he has offered his best work to the Journal and, in doing so, set an example and stimulated others to use *HSJ* as the prime vehicle for their best work. In his article, he challenges us to try to beat his record *HSJ*-only h-index. It is not easy to take the challenge: We are sure that Zbyszek will continue to work for *HSJ* and support it and thus his personal record in *HSJ* publications will continue to grow. But we will try to follow him, for the benefit of the journal.

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