

Editorial

The first year as Editor of *Cement and Concrete Research* has gone very quickly; it has been hard work but also very rewarding.

The first thing that I would like to do is to offer a very big thank you to all of the referees who have helped to ensure that the editorial standards of the journal are at least being maintained, and hopefully improving. I find it very gratifying to see the efforts which our referees make, which are often considerably more than is asked of them.

An equally heartfelt, thank you is due to the authors who have submitted papers, and have borne with us during the upheaval created by the change of the Editorial Office.

It is inevitable that the first year as Editor has been a learning process, but at the same time we have made progress in a number of areas. Thanks to the increased page budget which Elsevier has provided, the delay between acceptance of a paper and its publication in the printed journal has been dramatically reduced (from about 1 year to about 4 months). All accepted articles are, of course, available online, but I appreciate that this is not the same thing as seeing the paper in print as soon as possible.

The fruits of this effort are visible in the current issue which consists primarily of articles which have been reviewed and accepted since I took over as editor. All of the credit is due to the authors and referees, but I nonetheless take some pride in the quality and diversity of the research which is presented.

We have greatly appreciated the benefits which EES (Elsevier Editorial System, the online submission and review system) has given us in terms of the management of the submissions and review process. It is much easier for us to monitor progress and identify bottlenecks and delays. I hope that our authors and referees also approve of it. If the number of submissions is an indicator of approval, then EES is a success with our authors, as submissions have grown by over 50% this year.

While it is satisfying to have improved in some areas, I believe that there are still a number of issues which need to be dealt with. *Cement and Concrete Research* is the leading journal in our field, both in terms of the number of articles published and the number of citations which these articles receive. I think that it is fair to say that the journal serves the community of cement and concrete researchers well. However, I have to admit to being disappointed that so much of the work which is necessary for the success of the journal (i.e. refereeing articles), is done by only a part of our research community. It is almost always the case that the people, who are best able to act

as referees, are also the people with the heaviest workloads elsewhere. Nonetheless, if we want to see improvements in the quality of the articles the peer review process needs the commitment of everyone.

As a complement to improving the quality of our reviews, I would also like to reduce the time taken to review articles. I think it is reasonable to expect that the first review of an article should be completed in 3 months, but to achieve this, a number of things are required:

- on the part of the author, the minimum I expect is that they respect the guidelines on the format of papers (as described in the “guide for authors” at: <http://ees.elsevier.com/cemcon/>). I have reviewed many papers this year, and it is much, much easier when the manuscript is presented in a single column, double spaced, with line and page numbering. On a more technical note, if the figures are separated from the text of the manuscript; EES can check whether the quality of the figures will be satisfactory for (possible) publication.
- on the part of the Editorial Office, we need to find willing and competent referees, and EES allows us to manage a larger group of referees. We have needed these extra referees, given the increase in submissions, but nonetheless, there is always a need for more referees; and any offers or suggestions are always welcome.
- on the part of our referees, I hope that we can see that the deadlines for reviews are respected more fully. At present, one in three reviews are returned late, which means that the probability that a review will be completed on time is less than 50%. However, the feedback which we have had from our referees suggests that this situation can be improved relatively easily. The main reason that reviews are returned late is simply because they were overlooked, and that the reminders which we send are appreciated rather than being disliked. I have therefore asked my Managing Editor to be more diligent in sending reminders to referees.

The progress which we want to achieve in the review process will be helped by some changes which have been made to the Editorial Board of *Cement and Concrete Research*. Seven Associate Editors have been appointed, who will have a much more active role in the running of the journal. Their principal activities will be: to make a rapid judgement on whether a paper is worth sending for review; to help select the most appropriate referees; and to adjudicate in cases with

conflicting reviews. The associate editors have been selected to cover the range of subjects which we publish, and also to reflect the international nature of the journal. The Associate Editors are: Carmen Andrade, Arnon Bentur, Ellis Gartner, Fred Glasser, David Ho, Shunsuke Hanehara and George Scherer.

Finally, I would like to comment on a couple of issues which I have strong opinions. Firstly, I want to actively discourage multi-part papers: they are often repetitive, full of cross-references, and too often, the individual parts do not contain any substantive conclusions. I believe that the readers of *Cement and Concrete Research* should be given as complete a study as possible in a single paper, and, contrary to a commonly held misconception, there is no page limit (within reason) for research articles. The second issue which concerns me is research papers which consist only of the results of parametric studies with no discussion. As a

minimum requirement for a research paper, authors should propose what they believe are the underlying mechanisms responsible for the observations which they have made, and these propositions should be tested against the results and conclusions of other researchers. In the absence of this discussion, we have more data, but there is no advance in our understanding.

I look forward to another busy year, but I am sure that with support from everyone, *Cement and Concrete Research* will continue to make progress.

K.L. Scrivener

Editor-in-Chief

Ecole Polytechnique de Lausanne,

Laboratory of Construction Materials,

1015 Lausanne, Switzerland

E-mail address: karen.scrivener@epfl.ch.