50th Anniversary Editorial

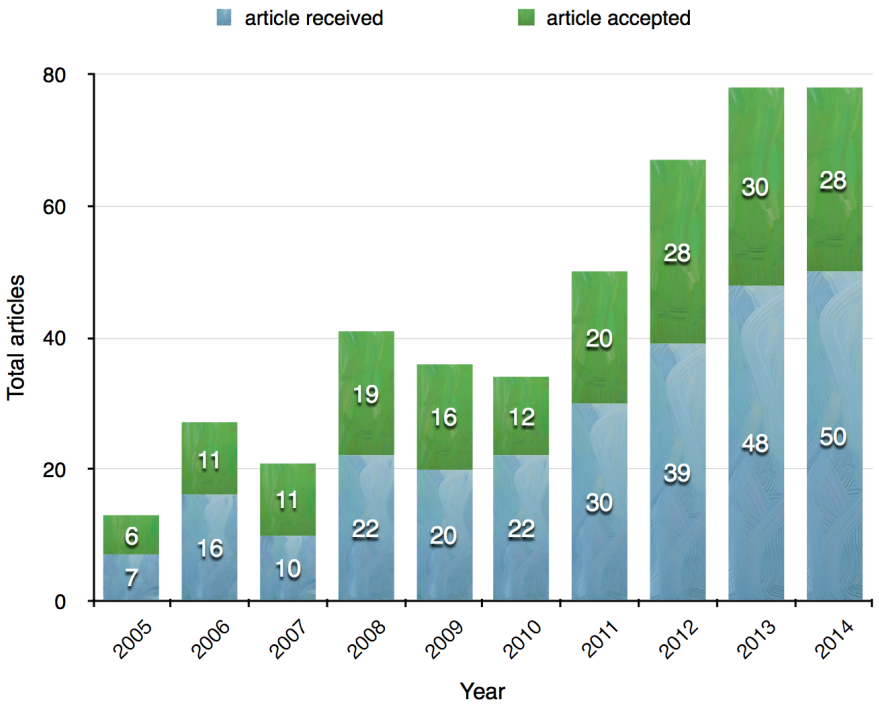
I feel highly honored and privileged to write this editorial at such a remarkable moment in time for the world's premier karst and cave science outlet, the International Journal of Speleology (IJS).

Since 1978, IJS represents the "voice" of the International Union of Speleology. The first chief editorial mandate was attributed to Prof. G. Claus at Florida State University in Tallahassee. By coincidence, after 50 years - time in which many great editors led IJS - the Editor-in-Chief is once again affiliated with a state university in Florida. The first volume of IJS came out in October 30, 1964, and included 19 articles mainly covering cave biology topics. These papers were written by authors from around the world, emphasizing IJS's international coverage from the very first issue in all aspects, i.e., location of research, authorship, and readership. The journal policy in those early years was to include papers related to all research fields involving cave and karst science. It soon grew clear to those handling IJS that because of the diversity of topics submitted to the journal, grouping biospeleology and physical speleology papers in different issues became a necessity. For several decades, the editorial board struggled to maintain a reasonable balance between these two main fields, publishing 2 to 4 issues per year. Although attention to this balance has been given throughout the past fifty years, there were times when one or the other topic prevailed. Over the last two decades, a number of other journals made their way to the top of the karst-publication pyramid. Most of them are now publishing a mixture of papers reporting results from all karst fields, as does IJS, reinstating the initial policy of accepting all but strictly biospeleological studies, which have now their own dedicated journal.

The number of papers submitted fluctuated greatly over the IJS's lifetime. If we examine the last decade in the figure below, we notice this trend as well. Over the last 6 years, the number of submissions increased continuously, with a significant jump since 2011 when the online submission was implemented as part of the open access platform sponsored by the University of South Florida Libraries. It is always unpleasant to reject a paper behind which authors packed a significant amount of work, but as Editor, I strive to keep the science in each and every article published in IJS at the highest level possible. Currently, the acceptance rate is 62.7%. In long run, this approach should be of benefit, especially to the karst and cave scientific community, but also to the journal itself as it will gain further recognition among other Earth Sciences journals.

IJS will try to keep current and bring its readers as many "hot" topic papers as possible. To do so, apart from regular Research Articles, we invite Review Articles and encourage contributors to submit short, highly original and significant papers for speedy dissemination as Rapid Communication articles. To maintain the high quality of IJS, the first objective must be to retain a strong flow of extensive papers on groundbreaking theoretical and applied topics or case studies of karst research. In addition, IJS supports the publication of thematic Special Issues on significant topics in emerging areas or on key cave and karst sites. This is an efficient way of disseminating the major research communicated during scientific meetings. The individual papers are peer-reviewed and published as soon as available in regular issues, but then labelled as part of the special issue and linked electronically.

Technology has greatly changed the field of karst/cave exploration and research. Like other fields in the earth sciences, over the last decades karst science has experienced rapid growth resulting from fast-paced and revolutionary advances of analytical facilities. Recent developments in a suite of techniques (*e.g.*, X-ray powder or single-crystal diffraction, inductively coupled plasma-mass spectrometry, electron microprobe, scanning electron microscopy, stable isotopes, LIDAR, DNA sequencing, etc.) give karst scientists unprecedented opportunities to advance the understanding of caves as physical, chemical, and biological environments. This translates into more exciting new discoveries



being communicated to scientists and cavers via karst-dedicated journals and other publications.

Making intelligent predictions on what one should expect (in terms of science) for the next fifty years is nearly impossible in this complex and highly diverse field of karst research. As we enter the second half century of *IJS*, I expect a continuing growth of high quality papers, with many studies directed towards under-investigated cave deposits, karst features, cave microorganisms, as well as other various cave processes and products. It is my hope that the *International Journal of Speleology* will remain at the forefront of publishing research papers of the highest caliber and impact in the field of karst science. A critical factor shaping the quality of papers published in *IJS* remains the capable work of our editorial board and our reviewers. I would like to thank everyone who contributed their time and expertise over the past 50 years to help make *IJS* the journal it is today. So, Happy Birthday to *IJS* at its 50th anniversary and I look forward to the next 50 years, or at least part of them.

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