

Report on ISPRS Journal of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing for the period 2000-2003

E. Baltsavias, Editor-In-Chief

1. Introduction and major points

The last period was marked mainly by problems caused by lack of understanding from Elsevier of the journal needs, frequent change of Elsevier personnel and continuous rejection of our proposals. Older problems with long paper queues and publication delays thus deteriorated instead of improving. This situation almost led to breaking our relations with Elsevier after a cooperation of 40 years. However, since the beginning of 2004 the relations with Elsevier have been put on a new healthy basis, an electronic paper submission tool has been introduced, an associate editor has been appointed and a new cooperative publishing editor from Elsevier became responsible for our journal.

2. Administrative matters

- A new contract between ISPRS and Elsevier was signed after hard and lengthy negotiations with substantial improvements. ISPRS got back, since apparently 1965, its rights concerning the ownership of the journal title and the material, the subscriber addresses, and the copyright which up to now belonged to Elsevier. An associate editor was approved to help the editor, mainly in faster processing of the papers, and from 2005 there will be 3 assoc. editors, one for each of the main topics of ISPRS. An electronic paper submission tool has been provided and this will be upgraded from the middle of 2005 to a much more functional and extensive software package. Individual Member subscriptions in electronic form will be made available from beginning of 2005, giving access to all material from 1995, while journals papers before 1995 can be bought with a single payment of a small amount.
- A new Editorial Advisory Board was appointed for the period 2001-2004 with substantial increase of members from remote sensing and particular spatial information sciences.
- Due to internal restructuring and other reasons, many personnel changes occurred at ELS (incl. 5 publishing editors from the Amsterdam to the Istanbul Congresses) and sometimes without notification of the editor, with obvious negative effects.
- After repeated proposals since 1999 and many back and forths, Elsevier finally agreed with the appointment of an Associate Editor, who is expected to help reducing the current journal problems, especially timely paper processing. Council considered various good candidates and finally appointed Prof. Olaf Hellwich, Technical University Berlin, who started his work on Dec. 1st 2003.
- Copy-editing and language editing are mostly done by the editor, whose administrative load has considerably increased.

3. Relations to Council/Publisher

The Editor was invited to ISPRS Council and Joint Council/TCP meetings (Albuquerque, London, Xian, Istanbul, Beijing) and presented matters related to the Journal. In particular the role of the technical commissions and working groups with respect to the journal has been discussed and most TCs and some WGs prepared proposals and organised theme issues of the journal. One meeting with Elsevier took place in 2001 and two in 2003 and the editor participated in a workshop of several Elsevier editors in November 2003.

4. Quality and timeliness of papers and reviews – processing speed

The quality of submitted papers seems to have decreased and phenomena of cheating (submission of papers already published in journals, (quasi)parallel submission to more than one journal) seem to have increased. Quality and speed of reviews have not improved and are still very variable regarding both quality and time needed. The number of incoming papers is high compared to the processing time needed for each paper leading to long paper queues. Due to this and additional problems, publication delays are occurring.

5. Impact factor

The impact factor, based on ISI's Citation Index, was for the period 1999-2003: 0.49, 0.69, 0.96, 0.39, 0.47. This Index is not very reliable due to the small size of the journal and the use of only the 2 preceding years in its calculation. Other impact criteria show a very different trend. For example, the number of citations of journal articles published in *all* years, which is a more robust indicator, for 1999-2003 was: 115, 139, 169, 231, 301 (showing a continuously increasing trend). Another criterion in the electronic age is the number of downloads of full papers (or full papers and abstracts) as an indication of the use of the papers and indirectly their impact. Provisional statistics show that the downloads have doubled or more from 2002 to 2003 and each of the ISPRS Journal papers (excl. older papers published in Photogrammetria) is accessed ca. 70 times a year. This is high compared to other journals - the average for all Elsevier journals is around 30 downloads per online article per year, while the top review journals have up to 200.

6. Statistics for papers, pages, authors and countries – paper content

Number of papers: 114 + 8 editorials (similar as in last 4-year period), number of pages (for papers only): 1514 (up from 1315), number of pages/paper: 12.4 (up from 11.05), number of authors: 315 (up from 254), number of authors per paper: 2.6 (up from 2.1; especially an increase of multinational papers has been observed), number of countries: 29 (same as in last period; main countries Germany, USA, Canada, Switzerland, Netherlands; more compared to last

period from Canada, Australia, Switzerland, less from India, Japan, Scandinavia; 17 countries with more than 1 equivalent paper; 8 countries with 5 equivalent papers or more). No detailed analysis of paper topics has been made, but there is a clear increase of SIS related papers and to a certain extent on visualisation papers and a decrease of pure photogrammetric ones.

7. Special and theme issues

Most such issues were initiated by the Technical Commissions and their Working Groups, with Commissions 4 and 2 being especially active, and Commissions 1, 7 and 3 less active. Special/theme issue published include: Dynamic and Multi-dimensional GIS, Imaging Spectroscopy and Hyperspectral Imaging (half issue), Geomatics in Mountainous Areas - The International Year of the Mountains, Integration of Geodata and Imagery for Automated Refinement and Update of Spatial Databases, Algorithms and Techniques for Multi-Source Data Fusion in Urban Areas, Challenges in Geo-Spatial Analysis and Visualization, Medical Imaging and Photogrammetry, Advanced techniques for analysis of geo-spatial data. Three "Best Papers" from the ICORSE Symposium in Buenos Aires, 2002 were published and a theme issue on disasters and hazards based on the 2003 ICORSE Symposium has been initiated but faces many difficulties. The majority of these issues were organised well by the guest editors, in spite of publication delays in most of them. Many of them were double issues. This and the high number of such issues led to publication delays for regular papers.

8. On-line electronic journal –WEB pages of Journal

Since some years, the newest papers appear as abstract, extended Summary (abstract, outline (section titles), figures, tables and references), HTML (with links of references to abstracts and full papers) and PDF files, while older papers have only abstract and PDF files. The papers now have more links at the references to abstracts or even full papers, especially via CrossRef which is supported by most publishers. All issues of the journal that were published by Elsevier back to the first issue of 1965 have been converted to electronic form as abstracts, abstracts with references (incl. a few links where available) and full text in PDF. These back issues are available to institutional subscribers by a one-off purchase agreement with a bundle of other journals, while the abstracts are freely accessible. An agreement is under way to digitise all issues from the first one in 1938. Since 2003

- Publication of supplementary material (like video, audio, background data, high-resolution images, software etc.) is possible in the electronic version of the journal. This option has been used by other journals very little up to now, but can be beneficial in our case, especially for additional and high-resolution images, movies and animations.
- Publication of colour figures in the electronic version, which in the printed version are in B/W, is now possible and gratis.
- Revised and proof-corrected articles are available on-line before print publication and can be cited using the DOI (Digital Object Identifier).

On Elsevier's WEB page, the 25 most downloaded articles for the previous 12-month period are now regularly listed and updated every 6 months. An update of the journal's WEB page at the ISPRS server was made, but a major redesign of the page is needed. According to the ISPRS Webmaster, the requests of the Journal front page at the ISPRS server the last period were: 2000: 1683, 2001: 3732, 2002: 8347, 2003: 8728, 2004 (Jan-Jul): 5581.

9. Electronic paper submission

A new tool for electronic paper submission, EISubmit, was used for the first time since January 2004. This relatively simple and partly cumbersome tool enables WEB-based submission of the papers, paper tracking for authors and editors, and electronic submission of the final papers to Elsevier. A much more functional package that enables full electronic and online management and tracking for authors, editors and also reviewers, called Elsevier Editorial System is used at Elsevier since end of 2002, and will hopefully will be operational for our journal from middle of 2005. The use of this system for some journals has led to significant reduction of time from submission to publishing and better papers and reviews and higher impact factors.

10. Electronic subscriptions

Elsevier has not provided full data for such subscriptions, while the partial data provided are sometimes contradictory. Electronic subscriptions in 2002 increased to 1349 institutions, including large consortia. Out of them, 246 are active (i.e. at least one full text access (FTA) per month). FTA has slightly increased from 2001 to 2002 with 1200-1600 accesses per month, and so did the number of active subscribers.

The journal is from 2003 offered electronically in more flexible subscription types for institutions, e.g. as electronic only without hardcopy, and in a bundle of journals related to Earth Sciences. Subscriptions currently give free access up to 1995. A conservative estimate is that over 5 million persons have access to the electronic version of the journal.

11. Hardcopy subscriptions

Elsevier has not provided full data for such subscriptions. Following the trend of recent years, common for most peer-reviewed journals, subscriptions declined from year to year for the institutional subscriptions (the main part of the total subscriptions) by 4% to 6% (4.2% in 2000, 4% in 2001, more than 5% in 2002). This reduction was more than compensated by the much higher electronic subscriptions, that many institutions or consortia tend to prefer. In spite of cheap subscriptions for members (persons) of ISPRS Members (40\$) and institutions from developing countries (50\$), these subscriptions, especially the latter, did not show any great increase (although concrete numbers for these

subscription categories could not be provided by Elsevier), making clear that they have to be made more widely known. Correct order forms for these cheap subscriptions have appeared on Elsevier's WEB page with a delay of one year, while later they were also not shown on Elsevier's WEB page for a period of several months.

12. Helava Award

The evaluation of the 2000-2003 papers and the selection of the winner were completed, with hard and good work performed by the 5-member jury. The winners were announced in the Journal, Highlights and the WEB pages of Elsevier and ISPRS and a press release was issued. The Award was presented during the Opening Session of the ISPRS Congress to the winners C. Lee (Korea) and J. Bethel (USA).

13. PR and Congress

The Journal has an exhibition booth (together with GITC) in the Istanbul Congress, with new PR flyers, sample copies, other related journals and books, order forms etc. A major aim is to solicit subscriptions of persons who are members of the ISPRS Members and institutions from developing countries.

14. Varia

- Gratis ads were published in the journal for Commission Symposia and the Congress and Call for Papers for special/theme issues
- To promote the journal and the cheap subscription categories, a PR leaflet for 2002 was prepared and distributed to all ISPRS Commission Symposia, while information on the journal was also presented in the ASPRS Spring Meeting and 10 other major non-ISPRS Conferences and Exhibitions. But generally PR, especially for the cheap member subscriptions, was low.
- Better information of editor and authors via OASIS (a WEB-based paper tracking tool) and email notifications for submission of paper, preparation of proofs etc.
- The number of ContentsDirect registrants (a free email-based alerting service including paper abstracts) has increased to 1468 covering all continents.

15. Outlook

The next period would be very crucial. Until the end of 2004 new editor, 3 assoc. editors and a new editorial advisory board will be appointed. The recent improvements in the relations with Elsevier and these personnel changes for the journal form the base for a possible substantial improvement regarding publication speed and reduction of long paper queues. Further aims should be improvement of paper and review quality and a smooth introduction of the new management and paper tracking software.