

Editorial

It has been a pleasure to act as Honorary Editor of *Géotechnique* for the past three years, and this Editorial is an opportunity to review briefly what has been done in that time.

The most important change is that every paper is now reviewed by two external referees, as well as by an assessor who reports on the paper to the *Géotechnique* Advisory Panel (GAP). This replaces the previous system where we used just one external referee and an internal assessor. The new process brings an added rigour to our reviewing, and I believe it amply repays the extra work involved. At the same time we have moved to a system where Technical Notes are reviewed externally as well, instead of the reviewing being carried out by the Panel only. As always we are extremely grateful to our long-suffering reviewers, many of whom clearly put in a huge amount of effort to provide constructive feedback for authors. We are particularly grateful to those reviewers who return the papers promptly!

One of my concerns has been the length of time taken to process papers. We have tried to improve this by introducing 'email meetings' to decide on publication of papers. These meetings are held between the usual meetings of the GAP. The Chairman circulates by email a set of recommendations based on the reviews received, and the Panel members respond with comments. Only non-controversial recommendations are dealt with in this way, but in these cases the use of the email meeting brings forward the whole acceptance process by about one month.

It is, however, at the beginning of the reviewing process where *Géotechnique* has a delay that other journals avoid. The summary of each paper is brought to a Panel meeting, and the Panel decides who should be asked to review the paper. This involvement of the Panel is a cherished tradition of the journal, but if a paper just misses one meeting it can mean a delay of

up to two months before the paper is sent out for review. I am seeking a solution to recommend to my successor that would eliminate this delay, while preserving the important involvement of the Panel. One possibility is simply to publish a series of deadlines for papers to be considered at particular panel meetings.

A development I look forward to, but which will be for my successor to see to successful completion, is the move to online submission of papers. The planning for this is now well advanced, and both authors and reviewers can look forward to a more streamlined system once the new software is fully operational. I hope that this will also ease the burden on the secretariat, who have to cope with an ever-increasing flow of papers.

I have enjoyed very much working with the members of the GAP, who work very hard to ensure the quality of the journal, and I thank them both for their efforts and for their good humour at many long Panel meetings. My special thanks though go to Mrs Mary Henderson, who deals with the huge amount of correspondence with authors, reviewers and the Panel with efficiency, infinite patience, tact and good humour. I would also like to thank Leon Heward-Mills of Thomas Telford Ltd for his unfailing support for the journal.

I can hand over the editorship to Professor John Atkinson of City University, confident that he will bring a wealth of experience and sound judgement to the role, but also knowing that he has a great affection and enthusiasm for *Géotechnique*. I wish him the very best in his endeavours!

Finally, and on a personal note, if anyone has a spare original of Volume 4, Number 1 (March 1954), I am very keen to acquire one to complete my collection.

Guy Houlby