

EDITORIAL

Geophysical Research Letters: New Policies and Features for AGU's Top-Cited Journal

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Geophysical Research Letters (*GRL*) is the top-cited geosciences journal of the past 10 years (see <http://scientific.thomson.com/press/2007/8402215/>). As a letters journal, its mission is to rapidly disseminate concisely written, high-impact research reports on major scientific advances of broad geophysical significance that are likely to have immediate influence on the research of other investigators.

In keeping with its mission, we *GRL* editors announce three key changes targeted at improving *GRL*'s stature among top-tier publications in the Earth and space sciences, as well as its service to authors.

First, the editorial board has been expanded to provide additional expertise in climate and global change, the cryosphere, ocean biogeochemistry, and solid Earth geophysics. These additions bring the total number of editors to 13, distributed across the disciplines of atmospheric sciences (three), solid Earth (three), space sciences (two), ocean sciences (two), hydrology and land surface processes (two), and the cryosphere (one). The current board features a broad range of cross-disciplinary expertise and an international perspective, both of which are critical for access to a deep pool of reviewers who are willing to agree to *GRL*'s stringent requirements for careful reviews on a short timescale (14 days).

Second, we will soon begin publishing solicited review articles. Review papers will be by invitation only, will focus on recent advances within the past 2–3 years, and will have a maximum length of six journal pages. Approximately 12 such reviews will be published annually.

Third, over the past year we have worked diligently to improve and streamline the review process to enhance the overall quality of papers selected for publication. Authors and reviewers should be aware that *GRL* has no provision for major revisions. Manuscripts that require more than modest revisions—such as additional analyses, simulations, or any changes that cannot be completed within 2 weeks—are viewed as not ready for the letters format and will be “rejected with encouragement to resubmit.” Moreover, we have been steadily increasing the number of manuscripts that are returned without review. In particular, those papers that in our opinion are inconsistent with the *GRL* mission will be returned to the author.

While the quality of the papers that we reject is often high, authors should be aware that *GRL* submissions, beyond simply being short reports, must have the potential to significantly affect a field and be publication-ready to warrant rapid publication in *GRL*.

Publication is indeed rapid. For the past 3 years we have maintained an efficient

review process, with a median time to first decision of 36 days and, for 50% of accepted papers, an average time from submission to publication of 13.5 weeks.

To meet these rapid publication goals, *GRL* relies heavily on its diverse group of expert reviewers for its success. We therefore request that when preparing review comments, reviewers put specific emphasis on whether the reported advance is significant and warrants rapid publication in a short article or whether the material would be better suited to a longer manuscript in a specific disciplinary journal.

Finally, *GRL* is committed to communicating breakthrough research results to the broader scientific community and to the general public. With input from reviewers, approximately 10% of *GRL* papers are highlighted in *Eos* and on the *GRL* Web site, and every highlighted paper is brought to the attention of the press. As a result, *GRL* papers are frequently featured in the major print, broadcast, and Web media, as well as in perspectives and news articles in magazines such as *Science* and *Nature*.

The combination of high-quality research, a dedicated editorial board, and unparalleled service continues to keep *GRL* among the top choices for rapid publication of today's highest-impact science. The newly implemented features and policies described, as well as our broad-based community support, will allow *GRL* to continue to flourish as a top-tier letters journal in the Earth and space sciences.

—JAMES S. FAMIGLIETTI, Editor in Chief, *Geophysical Research Letters*, on behalf of the *GRL* editorial board; also at Department of Earth System Science, University of California, Irvine.