

EDITORIAL

THOUGHTS ON ETHICS AND PUBLISHING

Editorial is a privilege of the editors to share their opinions and news with the readers. It's been a while since the last editorial was published in *Acta Carsologica*. In the following, I present my opinion on some issues related to our work and publishing. It was provoked by the Opinion, written by Wolfgang Dreybrodt and published in this issue. We are all aware that the way we do and publish scientific work has been changing fast and dramatically. Rapid progress, broad and productive collaborations, ever better access to sophisticated research equipment, the need for publishing and the search for funds sometimes distract us from deep thinking on the research questions that should be the key element of scientific work. The somehow provoking Opinion opens up many concerns that we all face. It does not reflect the opinion of the editorial board, although I agree with most of them. At some point one might say that times have changed, we need to collaborate and promote our work in order to be seen. However, basic scientific ethics as stressed in the Opinion, should not suffer from the changes.

One ethical question facing the editors is whether we should publish in our own journals. A principle answer would be no. *Acta Carsologica* has an inherent interest in the research at Classical Karst, where most of our editors work. Therefore, we publish in our journal, but we do not interfere into the editorial process of our manuscripts.

In times when you have to pay either to read and/or publish a manuscript, new opportunities arise for journals like ours. These journals can attract authors who, for whatever reason, cannot or do not want to spend money on publication and want to keep their work open. How-

ever, authors and readers should be aware that publishing is not our main task and that it is difficult to offer such good services as in journals belonging to the large publishing groups. In addition to managing reviews and making decisions, the editors' tasks often include providing funds for layout and printing, reporting, website maintenance, proofreading, translation, transport, packaging and dispatch of issues. Surely this should not be an excuse for the delays in publication or the long editorial process, but I hope for some understanding of those waiting. We can of course improve.

The whole system of scientific publishing is dependent on the review process. The everlasting problem of this and other journals is to get reviewers and then the timely reviews. Looking at the number of publications processed at any time, even in a "narrow" field like ours, we can imagine how many reviewers are needed. Most potential reviewers are busy, active researchers who are aware of the importance of the reviews, but are unable to respond to the requests. If a review takes one day, how many reviews per year can one accept? And, when it comes to selection, why not do a review for a high-ranking journal in which you want to publish your own work. Journals like ours therefore depend on a strong community interested in ensuring that their research field vivid and recognised. Small focused journals provide such a platform. I am asking you all to consider your own role in the karst community and accept the review from our and other karst science journals. This will keep us well and alive, and your work published and seen as well.

Franci Gabrovšek