

EDITORIAL

40 YEARS ON, WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

With this issue the Bulletin begins its fifth decade, a pretty remarkable feat in this ever-changing world. I recently pulled out the first issue I received (Vol. 2 No. 1, February 1969) after becoming a member in late 1968. This was immediately after completing my BE degree at Canterbury University and beginning my professional career in the Ministry of Works. I remember being urged to join the newly founded Society by my boss, the then Chief Structural Engineer, Otto Glogau (after whom our premier award for a publication is named). That issue covers the preliminary report on the Inangahua Earthquake of May 24, 1968. I well remember that earthquake, as it nearly pitched me out of bed in my flat in Christchurch, thus initiating my interest in earthquakes and earthquake engineering.

The reconnaissance team report of the Inangahua earthquake became the first of many such reports detailed in the Bulletin over the subsequent 40 years. The Society sent teams to many far flung countries following major 'quakes, returning with valuable scientific and technical knowledge to improve the design and detailing of new structures as well as the strengthening of earthquake prone buildings and bridges in New Zealand.

When I became Bulletin editor, for the first time, in 1980 all reviewed papers were retyped on specially formatted A1 sheets and any errors or amendments usually meant a retype of the entire page by the typist who lived across town. Diagrams and photographs were incorporated by the time-honoured and time consuming "cut and paste" technique. Today the Bulletin is entirely electronic with the electronic version of cut and paste being employed (less time consuming, usually). Manuscripts are submitted by email, reviewers correspond with the editor by email, the paper gets returned to the authors and amended electronically and the final "copy" is sent by email to Bruce Deam at Canterbury University to prepare it for the printer.

Well now that 40 years have passed and I've officially retired from full-time employment I've had a chance to think about the future of the Bulletin. Do we want it to become officially recognised by the international citation agencies (which I'm sure didn't exist back in 1968)? This will require papers being peer reviewed by 3 expert reviewers, an international editorial board should be constituted and publication must occur in the month specified on the front page. This is no easy task for a part-time editor (~1 day/week) in a small country with a limited number of authors willing or able to give the time to write full technical papers. Reviewing papers has become much more difficult over the years. The best reviewers are very busy people and they accept papers for review really because they love the subject, no payment has ever been offered.

Are you, the members, happy with the current Bulletin? It has always been a NZ based journal with probably 90% of papers originating from NZ based authors. Does it need to become more international in its content? Maybe there are enough international journals out there now. I suspect we only read the papers we have an interest in and probably overseas initiated papers wouldn't be of that much interest to the majority of members, who reside in NZ. I really don't know and you need to tell me if you have an opinion on this and the future of the Bulletin. Email me on l.s.megget@slingshot.co.nz

One suggestion to increase the number of papers being published is to include papers presented at our annual conference and indeed this issue contains three such papers from last year's conference in Palmerston North. These papers have not gone through the full peer review process, although they were briefly reviewed before being finally accepted for conference presentation. They all contain, in my view, useful information that should be made available to the wider world, rather than languishing on a forgotten CD somewhere! Also this year the Management Committee decided that the annual conference papers could be longer than the mandatory 8 pages if authors wished their efforts to be considered for the Bulletin. Thankfully several authors have prevailed themselves of this offer.

The worth, status and future of the Bulletin is in the hands of the NZSEE members. This journal has published many fantastically useful "state-of-the art and state of the seismic world" papers over the 40 years, when NZ lead the world in seismic design at least. Many of those papers formed the basis of today's design Standards. Maybe the world has caught up but I still believe the Bulletin can foot it with the rest of world, but the emphasis will be on New Zealand practice, as I believe it should be.

I await with eager anticipation your contributions, be they full technical papers, practice notes or letters to yours truly.

Les Megget
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