

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Dear Sir,

Re: Future direction of the NZSEE journal.

As young aspiring postgraduate researchers, we have come to know the NZSEE Bulletin, from its nascent issues of 1974 (the earliest available bulletin in the University of Canterbury's library) through to those most recent. Without doubt, it is a pleasure to read the highly intellectual discussions and articles featured in such past issues. In fact, our current research in earthquake engineering still relies on such past articles as a valuable source of information. The authors strongly support the NZSEE's mission to disseminate knowledge related to all aspects of earthquake engineering to NZ audiences. Without doubt, the society is the primary vehicle of knowledge transfer between the industry and research-academic, and the Bulletin should therefore play an integral part in such knowledge transfer. That however should not preclude the Bulletin of a high level of respect and recognition both within NZ and internationally. Acknowledging the ongoing effort by the NZSEE to revamp the Bulletin, the authors feel that several adjustments to the Bulletin are warranted to maintain its status as a leading publication on earthquake engineering, both in New Zealand and internationally.

Firstly, the authors feel it is absolute necessary that any articles submitted for consideration of publication be rigorously peer reviewed. Such a peer-review process is critical for ensuring the quality of papers appearing in the journal, as well as enabling submitting authors to significantly enhance the value of their own work, based on critical reviews from top professionals in the respective area. In order to facilitate such review process, it is believed that the Bulletin should have a more extensive editorial staff (some of whom could be internationally-based if necessary), consisting of an editor-in-chief and a board of associate editors (or scientific review panel). Such an editorial board will give credit to those involved extensively in the Bulletin review process, as well as widening the expertise of contact personnel available for the review process.

Secondly, the Bulletin editorial and the Society in general should seek more contribution from all stakeholders, ranging from professional bodies, academics, government organisations and industry leaders. This may be done through incentives for publications, possibly through IPENZ CPD points system. The current lack of letters-to-editor, earthquake reconnaissance reports, key project reports, and seminal research publications are startling in comparison to the NZSEE Bulletins of yesteryear.

Thirdly, the authors feel that in defence of the "made-in-NZ, for-NZ" philosophy, the quality of the Bulletin has been compromised. The Editorial suggested that overseas-initiated research and associated publications have limited value to NZ practitioners, with the assumption that practitioners would seek out international-based journals if required so. In search of quantity, the Editorial suggested to forgo a thorough journal-level review process. However, substantial progress has been made in earthquake engineering practice overseas and to neglect such developments in the Bulletin would be a contradiction to NZSEE's mission "to gather, shape, and apply knowledge to reduce the impact of earthquakes on our communities". Further dilution of the quality of the articles in the Bulletin would further jeopardize its usefulness as a publication.

Finally, the authors believe that high quality conference papers should be encouraged to be re-submitted (in an improved and extended form) for potential publication in the Bulletin. However, the review process in such cases should be the same as that for ordinary papers. Further to the above point, papers should be clearly distinguished as been either: full length manuscripts (research and practicing papers); or technical notes/short communications. It would be interesting to feature a whole issue of the Bulletin on benchmark project accomplishments in New Zealand.

Brendon A Bradley & Weng Y Kam

PhD Candidates, Department of Civil Engineering,
University of Canterbury
bab54@student.canterbury.ac.nz
wyk10@student.canterbury.ac.nz

Editor's response:

Manuscripts submitted to the Bulletin are peer reviewed by at least one reviewer. The Bulletin has always attempted to publish papers in an overall time duration shorter than many of the international journals. In the 30 years I have been associated with the Bulletin, either as the Editor or as a member of the Management Committee, the normal practise has been to have only 1 reviewer and another review was only sought where the first reviewer thought the paper unsuitable for publication.

Over the last 5 years or so the time taken to receive reviews has considerably increased, due I'm sure to the increased pressure of work. Increasing the number of reviews/paper will only increase the time between submission and publication. The Editor and the Management Committee agree that more peer reviews are preferable but that would require a greater number of papers in the editorial "pipeline".

The Management Committee is currently working up a list of possible members from around the Pacific Rim for the required Editorial Board. It is hoped that this new Board will initiate more international technical paper submissions in the future, as well as increasing the number of peer reviewers open to the Editor.