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An Increasingly Open Journal

Marco Barla, Aff.M.ASCE

Associate Professor, Dept. of Structural, Geotechnical and Building Engineering, Politecnico di Torino, Corso Duca Degli Abruzzi 24, 10129 Torino, Italy. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4589-0524>. Email: marco.barla@polito.it

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When I took the lead for the International Journal of Geomechanics (IJOG), I expressed my commitment to continue the path marked by the former distinguished editors (Barla 2020). After less than 2 years, I can confirm this intention with a better understanding of the duties that are attached to the Editor-in-Chief and the potential of the Journal.

The IJOG has a specific focus on soil and rock mechanics with an emphasis on theoretical aspects, computational, and analytical methods. With the theme of fundamentals through applications, the IJOG seeks to integrate theory, experiments, and verification toward the development of procedures for the solution of practical geotechnical problems. The broad and interdisciplinary field that geomechanics has become poses clear challenges for all of us. To help the readers find their way, the ASCE introduced the *Special Collections*. This groups papers that target specific emerging topics with a direct link from the journal website. Hopefully, this will allow our readers to easily find groups of related papers of interest.

It is a matter of pride that the 2020 impact factors have shown an impressive increase: the annual impact factor is now 3.819, and the 5-year impact factor reached 3.969. Despite some technical aspects, related to a slight change in the citation counts, these numbers are reflected well by other significant figures. The number of submissions received is stable (approximately 1,200 papers submitted/year), and the number of accepted manuscripts is increasing. This

testifies that, assuming the reviewer severity remained unchanged, the Journal has received and published higher-quality papers that have had an impact on the impact factor counts.

The turnaround time from submission to the first and final decision has continuously reduced in the last years and is now approximately 90 and 220 days, respectively. It is the aim of the publisher, editors, and authors, to speed up the review process. Speed is important; however, we must consider equity, completeness, and scientific soundness in the published articles. Therefore, authors need to be aware that the editorial team of the IJOG puts these on the frontline. We are grateful for the tireless help of the reviewers. They play a key role in the process, ensuring that a final published paper goes through several rounds of reviews and improvements and is sound and significant.

We want the IJOG to be perceived as an open community by the authors and the readers. Currently, a researcher has many journal options for publication. Nevertheless, access to publication remains limited by many biases that hinder complete openness. In line with the ASCE policies, the editorial team at the IJOG works hard to guarantee a fair review process for all the papers that we receive and continues to provide an independent opportunity for all. Based on this, the leadership of the IJOG has been active in improving gender and geographical balance in the editorial group and among the authors. Fig. 1 shows the origin of the accepted papers during the last 2 years and allows an appreciation of the global nature of the authors of the IJOG, with published papers received from all continents. In addition, this is reflected well in the composition of the editorial team (e.g., coeditors and associate editors) whose gender ratio is 20%, which is higher than the current typical figure for geoprofessions in the United States (Morrison et al. 2020). We have recently appointed new members to the Editorial Board of the IJOG, who

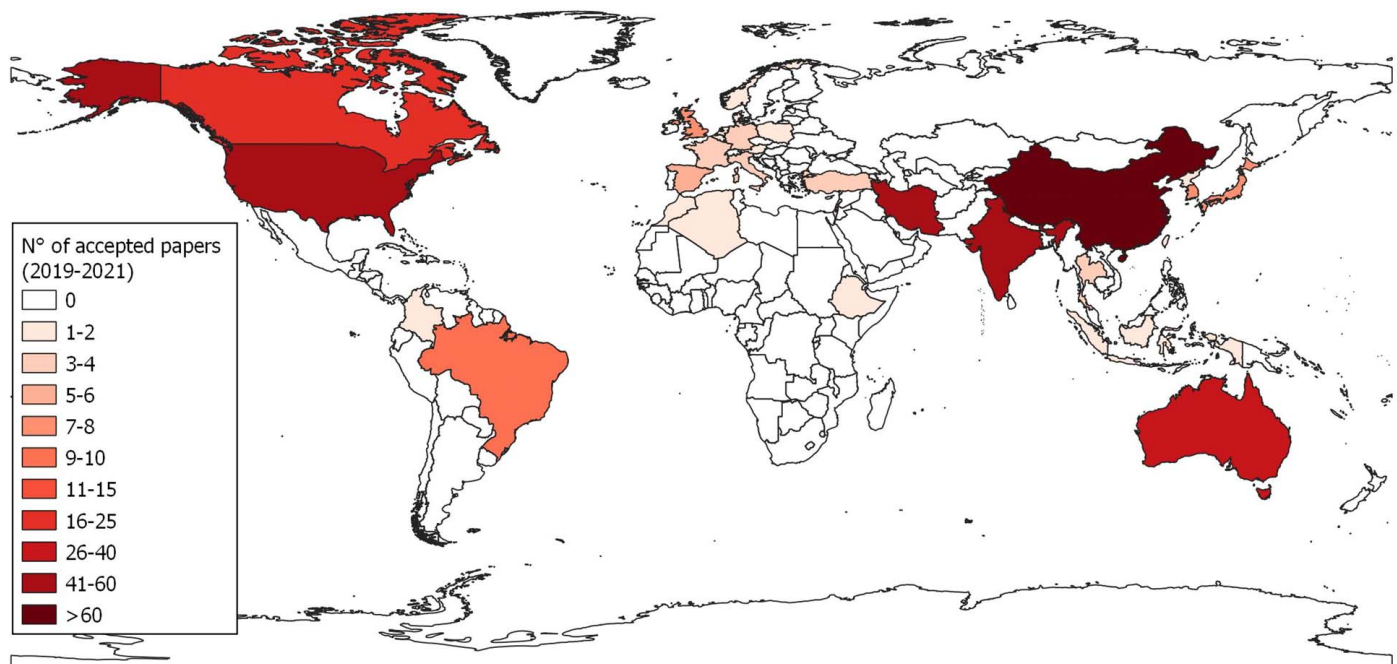


Fig. 1. Origin of accepted papers between 2019 and 2021.

have strengthened the group: Joanna Bzowka, Zhihong Zhao, and Hannah Zhou were appointed as Associate Editors, while Alessandra Insana, Alice Di Donna, Chloé Arson, and Helmut Schweiger have joined the Editorial Board.

The editorial team meets regularly to discuss matters that concern the Journal, new initiatives, and to improve and standardize the review process. A specific procedure to appoint new members to the Editorial Board has recently been discussed and approved. New candidates will be evaluated based on their scientific merits, expertise, and the number of completed reviews (i.e., % of total invitations) for the journal. A term of office of 3 years for the Editorial Board members and the Associate Editors has been established, after which the ability to continue or retire will be reviewed.

The aforementioned updates and statistics show that the journal is in good health. We are thankful to the reviewers, authors, and readers for their contributions.

Together with all the editorial team, we will continue to search for papers that can describe, in a conciseness and sharp manner, the advances brought by theoretical, computational, and analytical methods for the solution of geomechanical problems. We want to highlight new research and studies that will have an impact on methods, the solution of real issues, and challenges and that could open new paths for the Journal, for the discipline, and, eventually, for humanity.

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