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Original

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1 **The International Journal of Geomechanics is the result of a collective effort**

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7 As I complete my tenure as Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Geomechanics*, I find
8 myself reflecting on the immense privilege it has been to serve in this role over the past four
9 years. This journey has been both professionally rewarding and personally enriching. It has
10 allowed me to engage closely with the global geomechanics community, support cutting-edge
11 research, and witness the remarkable growth of the journal.

12 After the first Covid outbreak we have seen the number of manuscripts received increasing
13 continuously. In 2023 we received 1246 manuscripts, which is remarkable. If the current trend
14 continues, it is likely that we will reach a new record at the end of this year (Figure 1). As a
15 consequence, the 360 papers published in 2023 (actual record) will likely be met or exceeded this
16 year. This is a clear evidence of a healthy journal and its growing attractiveness among the
17 geomechanics community worldwide. The increasing volume of manuscripts submitted raised
18 publication standards to a new level of selectivity. This is also shown in Figure 1 where the
19 acceptance rate has reduced substantially in the last few years and is now around 27%.

20 The journal's progress during the past several years is a reflection of the collective efforts of our
21 entire community. I am particularly thankful to the reviewers, who have offered their time and
22 expertise to ensure that each article published meets the highest standards of quality and rigor.
23 Their dedication to enforcing a rigorous peer review process has been a cornerstone of the
24 journal's success, and their contributions have been invaluable. We had very few disagreements

25 with authors of rejected papers which is not only reflective of a balanced review process but, also
26 demonstration of maturity and cooperation of our authors. I am deeply thankful to our Co-Editors
27 for their guidance and support that were instrumental to achieving our goals.

28 A significant increase in the number of submissions also implies an increased workload for the
29 Editorial Board. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the members of the Editorial Board
30 for their guidance, support, and collaborative spirit. Their expertise has helped steer the journal in
31 new and exciting directions in line with the latest advancements in geomechanics. The editorial
32 team met regularly to discuss matters of the journal, new initiatives as well as improve and
33 homogenize the review process (20 meetings in the last four years).

34 Additionally, I am grateful to the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) staff for their
35 continuous assistance and professionalism and to the members of the Technical Publication
36 Committee of ASCE. Their efforts have played a critical role in the smooth operation of the journal
37 and maintaining its high standards.

38 During my term, together with the journal leadership, we achieved several important milestones.
39 One of the key accomplishments was the establishment of a policy to regularly update the
40 journal's leadership and editorial roles based on a three-year cycle after which the options of
41 availability to continue or to retire and create space for others to join the Editorial Board are
42 addressed explicitly. New candidates are evaluated on the basis of scientific merits, expertise, the
43 number of completed reviews (% of total invitations), and the subject area needs of the journal.
44 This policy ensures a steady influx of fresh ideas and perspectives, keeping the journal dynamic
45 and forward-looking. We updated the Board this January with appointments lasting until the end
46 of 2026.

47 The *International Journal of Geomechanics* is unique in being the only ASCE journal with a truly
48 international focus, and we have worked hard to ensure that this global vision is also reflected in

49 our Editorial Board. The current Board counts 57 members representing 19 countries across the
50 five major geographical regions of the world (Figure 2).

51 One of the aspects I am most proud of is the improvement we've made in gender balance on the
52 Editorial Board (23% of our Editorial Board are now women), a crucial step in fostering diversity
53 and inclusion in our field (Barla 2022). We believe that diversity within the Editorial Board
54 strengthens the journal and enhances its ability to serve the global geomechanics community.

55 Great effort was devoted to keep a reasonable publication time despite the increasing number of
56 manuscripts received. This has been achieved both by recruiting a larger number of Associate
57 Editors but is also due to the close monitoring of the paper processing by the ASCE staff.

58 The current turnaround time from submission to first decision is around two months. While short
59 publication time is important for authors, a robust peer review process that ensures equity,
60 completeness, and scientific soundness, undoubtedly, requires time.

61 Another major achievement has been the journal's increasing prominence in the field, as reflected
62 by our overall growing impact factor (from 1.197 in 2013 to 3.3 in 2023). This is another indicator
63 of the journal's rising influence and the high quality of the research we publish.

64 I am proud to say that the *International Journal of Geomechanics* has reached a strong position
65 within our field. Our collective efforts have resulted in a journal that not only maintains rigorous
66 academic standards but also fosters innovation, collaboration, and scientific discourse. The
67 diversity of research topics we have published, from soil mechanics and foundation engineering to
68 rock mechanics and sustainable geotechnologies from constitutive modelling and analytical
69 methods to computational geomechanics and artificial intelligence applications, reflects the ever-
70 evolving and dynamic nature of our field. This has been a testament to the vibrancy of the
71 geomechanics community and the dedication of our authors.

72 As I pass the torch to my successor, Professor Richard Bathurst, I do so with great confidence in his
73 leadership and vision. Richard brings a wealth of experience and insight to the role, and I have no
74 doubt that he will guide the journal to even greater heights. I wish him and the entire team
75 continued success and look forward to seeing the journal thrive in the years to come.

76 Thank you for the support, collaboration, and dedication that have made this journey so fulfilling.
77 It has been an honor to serve as Editor-in-Chief, and I am excited to continue contributing to this
78 vibrant community in the years to come meeting the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

79

80 **References:**

81 Barla, Marco (2022). *An increasingly open journal*. Int. J. Geomech., 2022, 22(5): 01822