

Editorial

## **Remote Sensing Open Access Journal: Leading a New Paradigm in Publishing**

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*Remote Sensing* is a pathfinding open access journal providing great opportunities for the growing community of remote sensing and geoscience scientists and practitioners to publish high quality research and practical papers expeditiously. It is a journal keeping up with the changing times we live in: open access, instant access, free access, and global access from whichever precise latitude and longitude you live in on the planet Earth or for that matter anywhere in space as long as we have internet access! So, open access journals are breaking many paradigms and setting forth new ones that will soon become the norm as we advance into the twenty-first century. The days of inordinate delays in publishing good science research articles are fast disappearing with open access journals. In remote sensing and geoscience, *Remote Sensing* (<http://www.mdpi.com/journal/remotesensing/>) is one of the pioneers, thanks to the vision of Dr. Shu-Kun Lin, the publisher. It started in the year 2009 with headquarters in Basel, Switzerland and a branch office in Beijing, China. It will soon complete Volume 3 by the end of 2011.

When you take a look at the three volumes and 28 issues (12 issues each in 2010 and 2011 and four during 2009) published so far, you will see many outstanding articles. Many of these articles are as good as, or many times better than, the ones published in conventional remote sensing journals. *Remote Sensing* also brings you special issues on many topics such as global croplands ([http://www.mdpi.com/journal/remotesensing/special\\_issues/croplands/](http://www.mdpi.com/journal/remotesensing/special_issues/croplands/); [1]) and many other topics. Please see a list of these special issues at: <http://www.mdpi.com/journal/remotesensing/sections/>. As you will see, these special issues are edited by some of the best people working in remote sensing science. One example is the upcoming special issue on “Remote Sensing of Biological Diversity” by Professor Gregory Asner of the Stanford University. We welcome special issues from time to time, therefore, if you have a creative idea for a special issue, please send us your proposal.

An impressive feature of *Remote Sensing* has been the quality of its editorial board: <http://www.mdpi.com/journal/remotesensing/editors/>. The team comprises highly accomplished and committed remote sensing and geoscience scientists from around the world. Professor Wolfgang Wagner, from the Institute of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (IPF), Vienna University of Technology

(TU Wien), Gusshausstraße, Vienna, Austria, was the founding Editor-in-Chief (EiC) of *Remote Sensing*. He did an outstanding job and as we saw *Remote Sensing* evolve, much of the credit must go to Dr. Wagner for maintaining the highest of standards. It was, however, very unfortunate that he resigned as EiC, taking moral responsibility for publishing a controversial article on climate issue (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-14768574>; [2]). Even though many editorial team members felt that the resignation was unnecessary, we had to respect Dr. Wagner's decision. Thank you, Dr. Wagner, for your outstanding service to the remote sensing community.

We are at a stage in the journal's short history, where we are actively seeking to have *Remote Sensing* recognized by Web of Science. Indeed, our goal is even beyond this: with a vision to become one of the best remote sensing journals in the world with a high impact factor. This is an ambitious goal which requires a lot of hard work and commitment to move forward, but it is a "doable" vision. This challenge was one of the reasons that I accepted the offer to become the Editor-in-Chief (EiC) for *Remote Sensing*. The other reasons were: my passion for remote sensing science and my wish to serve the remote sensing community in which I belong.

Our goal in *Remote Sensing*, looking ahead, will be to publish high quality papers that are based on solid data, in-depth analysis, sound methods, rigorous investigation and creative ideas. Further, that papers are of course well written. The reviewing and publishing process is quite a daunting job. We are all busy people and publishing is a self-rewarding voluntary effort where each of us takes pride in our service to the community that serves us! So, I request active, committed, and intense participation of: (a) editorial team members; (b) reviewers; and (c) authors.

First, I expect the editorial team members to remain active and provide solid support in the review-evaluation-decision making process. As an EiC, I would like to make final call on all articles published in *Remote Sensing* to ensure quality, consistency, and fairness. However, I do not claim to be an expert on everything. Indeed, I want to base my decisions on: (a) reviewers comments; and (b) highly valued advice of the editorial team. There will certainly be papers requiring different expertise that we may ask one of the Editorial Team Members to make a final call.

Second, the role of reviewers is very important. Reviewing is sadly a thankless job. But, by doing a good and honest review you make an immense (even if, often, unrecognized!) contribution to the community. If you want fair, quick, helpful reviews of your own papers (which, I am sure, all of us expect), try and become a great reviewer. As any editor of a journal will tell you, there are many times you hear a researcher/scientist tell the editor that he or she does not have time to review a paper. However, at the same time if his or her paper is in review, they will remind you now and then on the status of their paper and many times grumble and complain about the delays. You earn that right to complain, ONLY if you yourself review several (at least one paper a month must be mandatory for all researchers in their evaluations, in my opinion!!) papers a year in a timely manner and in all sincerity. Indeed, when I see excellent reviews, I more or less go with the reviewer recommendation when clicking accept or reject. It is only when reviews are below standard (or when a reviewer has not taken the time to review a paper properly), that there is a need for additional reviews and greater involvement from my editorial team colleagues' and/or myself. Of course turning down reviews is justified in a few instances such as if you have: (i) reviewed at least one paper a month; (ii) the subject is not your area of expertise (in such cases you can still help by recommending someone else); and (iii) health or other personal reasons that are unavoidable.

Third, the role of authors: Great authors make great journal! Yes, that is said with emphasis. My advice to authors, is to submit an article only when it is really ready (read the first sentence of this paragraph to see what I mean). I would also like the authors to read the updated “Instructions to Authors” in the *Remote Sensing* website carefully. In the last two months of my role as EiC, I had to make decisions on many papers. I was particularly concerned about how the abstract, conclusions, and discussions are written. We have added new guidelines on these aspects. We will not accept papers even for review without fulfillment of these mandatory requirements. If these instructions are followed, life becomes easy for you the authors, reviewers, editorial team members, EiC, and above all the editorial office. The above three components constitute the three pillars of any Journal.

The fourth pillar is the editorial office. In this regard Dr. Brietta Pike (Production Editor) and Mr. Elvis Wang (Managing Editor) are already doing a great job. Added to this is the role of the Publisher (Dr. Shu-Kun Lin) and myself as EiC. So, if we have the above four pillars standing firm and able to take the entire load, then we will have a magnificent creative structure called *Remote Sensing* for a broad spectrum of Remote Sensing and GeoScience in the global community.

Let us all work together to create a truly outstanding *Remote Sensing* journal. Thank you for reading the editorial and I look forward to your support.

Please do not hesitate to write to me with any ideas or issues or any matter that concerns publishing in *Remote Sensing* that you deem fit. I shall write an occasional editorial from time to time.

Happy New Year for 2012!

## References

1. Thenkabail, P.S. Guest editorial: Special issue on “Global Croplands”. *Remote Sens.* **2010**, *2*, 2305-2312.
2. Spencer, R.W.; Braswell, W.D. On the misdiagnosis of surface temperature feedbacks from variations in Earth’s radiant energy balance. *Remote Sens.* **2011**, *3*, 1603-1613.

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