



Water International

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The reminiscences

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The reminiscences

W. Hall C. Maxwell



I first came to the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign as a young faculty member with a very narrow interest in aspects of fluid mechanics and mathematics associated with motions of hydrofoil craft. One of my early assignments, engineered by senior faculty to broaden my outlook, was to assist Ven Te Chow in his advanced hydrology course. During that semester I became converted from one who viewed hydrology as a rather dull topic, and with some suspicion that it was not far removed from the realm of voodoo science, to one who saw it as an exciting scientific discipline with tremendous potential for development. Later I had many opportunities to follow Ven’s research interests, both in stochastic hydrology and in water resources systems analysis, by serving on doctoral committees of students working under his guidance. Last, but not least, was the opportunity for even broader exposure to the many different aspects of water brought about by the invitation that he extended to serve on the editorial staff of *Water International*.

My introduction was rather gentle – Ven asked me to be calendar editor and showed me where I could find the sort of information that he wanted to appear in the calendar of international meetings. In under a year he asked me to broaden the scope of my activities and become technical editor. He provided me with a book on editing, published by McGraw-Hill, and gave me several useful hints on proofreading. One in particular has always stuck with me – the majority of typographical errors in manuscripts may be found in the heavy black type at the tops of pages and atop subsections. Proofreaders usually do not ‘see’ such type.

The early issues of *Water International* had a different photograph on the front cover of each issue. It was Ven’s hope that it would someday evolve into something like *National Geographic*. When Elsevier Sequoia took over as publishers they nixed that idea as too expensive and instituted a standard cover for each issue. In ensuing years we occasionally changed the cover design, but used a standard design for successive issues.

Ven also thought it was important to have a Washington, DC, address, so a post office box was rented and a succession of people hired to service it and pass the important mail on to us.

Later, we started to use the address of the editorial office as this was much more efficient and less time-consuming. In the beginning we generally had to rely on postal mail, but this did not work too well in communicating with developing countries. In some countries people would steal the mail to get the stamps for resale to collectors, so we learned to use printed postage rather than attractive stamps. Later, faxes made communicating a little easier and delivery more certain. When email and the internet became available it made life so much easier.

I continued in the role of technical editor for the next nine years under succeeding editors-in-chief, Roy Beard and Glenn Stout. Part way through his time as editor-in-chief, Glenn tried to persuade me to take on that job, but I declined his invitation. However, when Glenn became secretary-general I agreed to take the responsibility and continued as editor-in-chief for the next eight years. I eventually became tired of the hassle of getting reviewers to respond in a timely fashion, so I managed to accumulate enough reviewed material that whoever succeeded me would have enough to put out a couple of issues, and finally convinced Glenn that it was time for a change. When Mike Demissie and Nani Bhowmik were selected to succeed me, I volunteered to continue working on the production of the journal as long as I did not have to select or chase down reviewers. I had come to enjoy editing the manuscripts for final production, so continued to do that for about four more years in the role of senior editor.

Working on the production of *Water International* was a tremendous educational experience. My worst academic performances had been in English grammar and English literature, so I was forced to put in a great deal of effort, particularly on the former. I had been required to study Latin in high school and got out of it at the earliest opportunity. However, my experience in editing *Water International* convinced me that Latin had been one of the most useful courses I had ever taken, and I often wished that I had been required to take ancient Greek. When dealing with manuscripts written in imperfect English by people whose native tongue was a Romance language, the knowledge of Latin roots was extremely useful in deciphering what they really wanted to say. We had plenty of Asian students and colleagues around to help decipher what people from Asian areas were really trying to get at. My greatest difficulty was in deciphering the intent of native Russian speakers, and because of the Cold War there were not too many people around to consult.

One amusing recollection is that when we were having difficulty in getting enough reviewed manuscripts together for, say, the March issue in a particular year, we decided to label the four issues spring, summer, autumn and winter to give ourselves a little more leeway in getting the journal out. This went on for several years until Dr Guillermo Cano took me to task. He remarked that it may be autumn in Urbana, but it is not autumn in Buenos Aires.

All in all, I have really appreciated the opportunity to interact with so many fine people. I still cannot resist editing anything that is put in front of me, and I still enjoy it! However, I am getting a bit rusty, so please forgive any imperfections in what I have written. I wish *Water International* continued success. And reviewers, please send in your reviews in timely fashion!

Misganaw Demissie and Nani G. Bhowmik

Dr Glenn Stout asked Dr Nani Bhowmik and I if we were willing to serve as co-editors-in-chief of *Water International* in 1994. At that time both Dr Bhowmik and I were working at the Illinois State Water Survey in the Hydrology Division. After an extensive discussion with Professor Maxwell, who was the editor-in-chief at the time, we both agreed and took over the responsibilities from Professor Maxwell after we received our orientation and helpful advice. In my case, I had an earlier exposure to *Water International* since my professor and mentor, Professor Maxwell, was executive editor of the journal. For a long time the executive office of International Water Resources Association (IWRA), under the leadership of Dr Glenn Stout, was located at the same hydrosystems building where I had my office as a graduate student. Eventually, Professor Maxwell asked if I would be willing to serve as calendar editor and book review coordinator for *Water International*, which I agreed to do until I become co-editor-in-chief in 1994.

I also had a very useful experience about the type of work involved in coordinating and editing manuscripts from international sources by working with Dr Glenn Stout in coordinating and editing all the contributions from agency representatives and scientists from Africa, Europe and the United States for the proceedings of the Sahel Forum: 'The State-of-the-Art of Hydrology and Hydrogeology in the Arid and Semi-Arid Areas of Africa' for a conference held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in 1989.

We served for four years. It was a great educational process, since we had to review and edit contributions in English and sometimes in French to produce the proceedings that was finally published by the IWRA. This exposure really prepared me for what was to follow. As any editor knows, we received all types of manuscripts, some well written and other that were really rough; we even received some handwritten papers. However, our goal was to make sure that we had contributions from around the globe and we worked extra hard with contributors from less represented countries to fulfil the goal of IWRA and to demonstrate that *Water International* is a truly international journal. I believe over the years we all have accomplished this goal and *Water International* continues to flourish.

Dr Bhowmik had been working at the Illinois State Water Survey since he moved to Illinois from Colorado State. He developed great working relations with Dr Glenn Stout who at the time was executive director of IWRA and at the same time director of the Illinois Water Resources Center. Dr Bhowmik attended several of the IWRA congresses and developed good relations with many members. Because of his international connections, he was able to solicit contributions from many scientists in the United States, Asia and Europe. We had a significant increase in submissions that kept us busy for some time. We also organized two special issues dealing with floods as the topic became critical.

[written by M. Demissie]

Benedikt (Ben) Dziegielewski

When the executive office of IWRA moved from the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign to Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, I assumed the responsibility of executive editor and Slobodan Simonovic became science editor. It was the newly elected IWRA president Benedito Braga who initiated the change to reinvigorate our flagship publication. Professor Simonovic quickly organized an editorial board that worked diligently to chart a new course for the journal. For me it was a great deal of evening and weekend work on enlarging the meagre ‘pipeline’ of manuscripts. I had two PhD students who were helping some authors from developing countries to work on manuscript revisions. But Slobodan was able to increase the number of papers and their quality, mostly through dedicated theme issues and invitations for manuscript submissions to the leading experts among IWRA members and others. He edited the March 2000 issue (volume 25, issue 1) which included some of the most-frequently cited papers by Peter Gleick and Igor Shiklomanov. While the number of manuscript submissions has increased several fold, this was a mixed blessing because of the greatly increased demand for peer reviewers as we used three or four independent reviews for each paper and initial editorial screening of papers became essential. Professor Evan Vlachos took over the role of science editor after Slobodan Simonovic and for two years my departmental colleague Dr Bruce Hooper took over as executive editor. I am very pleased to see the continuing growth in stature of *Water International* under the excellent care of Professor James Nickum as editor-in-chief and his editorial team.

Slobodan Simonovic

When Ben Dziegelewski and I assumed the responsibilities of executive and science editors the main tasks were aimed at (1) strengthening *Water International*; (2) providing the broader recognition of the journal; and (3) involving recognized experts of different professional backgrounds with the journal. Dedicated theme issues and invited manuscripts made an impact and number of submitted manuscripts increased significantly. At that time, *Water International's* profile was in the process of being formed. Papers with the very technical content were published alongside those dealing with social, legal and other water management-related issues. In my opinion, this was probably the main contribution that Ben and I provided to the journal with the assistance of the editorial board. From that point the journal succeeded to reflect fully the interdisciplinary nature of water resources management and became the outlet for publishing papers from various disciplinary backgrounds. The challenge of maintaining the interdisciplinary profile and at the same time ensuring the very high-quality papers is still present. I join in congratulating Professor James Nickum on his outstanding leadership which is providing for continuous growth of *Water International*.

Bruce Hooper

The period in the life of the journal at my time was a time of consolidation, transition and highlights, including a profound period of innovation that informed the debate on water resources development, management and planning. As executive editor I was able to build on the sound leadership of my predecessor, Professor Ben Dziegielewski, who worked in the same department as me at Southern Illinois University. When I arrived in 2002, Ben had established an excellent review system for papers, a comprehensive reviewer database and practices which were easy for me to adopt. He also provided mentoring to myself and the *Water International* staff during my time. So my task was easy. During this period I was associate professor in the Geography Department at Southern Illinois University, which was also the home of IWRA and the US Universities Council on Water Resources. That department was at the heartbeat of water policy in the United States, something which attracted me to the offer of professorship and editorship in 2002.

I was executive editor for a two-and-a-half years, from volume 27, issue 4 (2002) to volume 29, issue 4 (2004). In that period, the journal maintained its strong publication record with four issues a year, printed locally in Illinois (and on time) and then we hand-packed the journals and mailed them to readers – how different to today. During this time the editorial team also discussed with IWRA executives how the journal could go online. Then the technology was relatively new and we were unsure of the cost implications at a time when IWRA was strapped for cash. It is encouraging to see how this later developed and has allowed the journal to be far more readily accessible to the international community of water scholars, professionals and practitioners.

The editorial team was able to maintain this steady publication stream due to constant author demand with a pool of about 100 papers in the review process at any time. The journal maintained close connection with its core purpose during this period. As stated in the journal's aims and values, the editorial team worked to ensure the journal would "serve as an international gateway to the people, ideas and networks that are critical to the sustainable management of water resources around the world". We maintained a publishing record of "articles, state-of-the-art reviews and technical notes [that were] policy-relevant and aimed at communicating in-depth knowledge to a multidisciplinary and international community". *Water International* "published both individual contributions and sets of papers on cutting edge issues".

Professor Evan Vlachos added sound, profound insights as science editor, especially from an international perspective. In the IWRA office, the journal was ably assisted by Sandy Jacobs, several postgraduate students, artists who redesigned the cover and an Illinoisan printing house.

During this period the journal included technical notes, messages from the president, a special edition on transboundary aquifers (volume 28, issue 2), a special issue for the XIth World Water Congress, 5–9 October 2003, held in Madrid, Spain, on ‘Water Resources Management in the 21st Century’ (volume 28, issue 3) as well as a large variety of relevant papers by highly respected authors and new and emerging ‘bright lights’ in the water sector.

The journal always amazed me by the way it amply demonstrated the widespread and profound range of professional and research experiences in water resources management of IWRA members and others who submitted papers for publication. One ongoing benefit of the journal was “the ability to demonstrate, stipulate and promote interdisciplinary perspectives in water resources research and practice by emphasizing comprehensive, holistic, and pragmatic approaches to water problems based on the use of systems approaches”. While an aim of the journal at the time, it also showed how *Water International* was a flagship of innovation in the early 2000s.

Water International was the broker of knowledge on improving water governance, management, development, planning and policy. I wrote the following editorial in 2004 and I think it amply demonstrates the quality of *Water International* then and as it still is today:

Perhaps more telling is the implications of the scholarship revealed in the papers published herein (Volume 29, 2): what this small sample of intellectual endeavour is saying is that water scarcity is rapidly pushing practitioners to find immediate solutions. We appear to have passed the rubrics of ‘sustainability’ and ‘economic reforms,’ particularly in developing nations. The language of these papers delves far deeper. The concern is for the here and now: learning from sustainability experiences and crafting improved management options, and doing this in ways that produce immediate results. The world is looking for new water resources management wisdom – hydro-wisdom. Practitioners and water users are looking to researchers, agencies, and managers for new ways to not only conceptualize addressing water scarcity but also demonstrate best practice that works. *Water International* continues to be a flag bearer of this improved knowledge exchange. That is our goal.

These values ring true today.

Raja Sengupta

Under the able leadership of the team at Southern Illinois University–Carbonale (SIU-C), the journal had already garnered significant reputation and a growing number of submissions. However, with the decision to move the head office of the IWRA out of the United States to other international venues, McGill University and Montreal was chosen as the destination for the next couple of years. That is when I was asked by the new executive director, Dr Chandra Madramootoo, to become the editor for the journal for a period of a year. As a graduate of, and subsequent faculty at, the Department of Geography at SIU-C, I became a bridge between the old and new homes of *Water International*. During this transition period, I was grateful for the assistance given by both Ben and Bruce in organizing the manuscript files we received from them, and my very able graduate student and editorial assistant, Martha Otero, in ensuring the transition was as smooth as possible. It also became a period of looking forward to the future of *Water International*, with the decision of the IWRA board to push towards electronic review and publishing of the journal, and the selection of an external publisher, Taylor & Francis. At this juncture, Jim joined us to help with this herculean task with the editorship eventually passing over to him.

During the relatively short period of my editorship, there were a couple of topics that were promoted. First, to focus on the global nature of the work being done by the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), and the importance of water in agriculture, a special issue was produced in 2006 (volume 31, issue 3) that discussed the importance of scales in water resources management. Second, applied models and spatial decision support systems (SDSS) were promoted in equal measure to water resource management articles dealing with legal and organizational frameworks to provide a holistic and balanced perspective. It is to Jim's credit that he supported and even held onto this view even when the editorship passed onto him. In fact, the section editorial written by me in 2007 (volume 32, issue 3) was with his encouragement and support. In short, his significant experience and inclusive nature ensured that the transition was smooth and the journal flourished in serving its audience.

James E. Nickum

I was primarily an IWRA lurker from the time Glenn Stout convinced me to join in 1986 until two decades later when I received an enquiry as to whether I would be interested in running for chair of the publications (also known as communications) committee. I asked what the position entailed, and was told that it could be as little or as much as I wanted. Little sounded good, so I said yes. Little did I know.

I became chair at a time when the executive office and with it the editorial office first moved out of the United States – actually, I believe it was its first excursion out of the state of Illinois – to Montreal. The new editor-in-chief, Raja Sengupta, and his capable assistant, Martha Otero, found themselves with a lot of unpacked boxes and a six-month delay in publication, and a very large inventory of manuscripts, both accepted and in process. So I offered to pitch in and help where I could, including assembling the backlogged manuscripts into thematic sections. We were beginning to make some progress when after a few months the executive office closed and shortly thereafter the editorial office. The IWRA president, Cecilia Tortajada, asked if I would take on the editor-in-chief responsibilities on a temporary basis. There was a need, and temporary sounded good, so I said yes.

Raja and Martha made it as seamless a transition as was possible under the circumstances. The ability to place all the manuscripts on a single CD, and eventually a USB stick, facilitated the transition to a virtual ‘editorial office’. Cecilia arranged bridge funding and production support through the Third World Centre for Water Management, and helped me learn the ropes of evaluating manuscripts and identifying reviewers. Perhaps most importantly, she had negotiated the journal’s return to a major publisher, this time Taylor & Francis, from 2008. The two of us scrambled to get everything tidied up for that transition, including most famously the production of a supplementary paperless mega-issue at the end of 2007 on CD.

As for the temporary status – there was a bit of a contest for the regular position between Tony Turton and myself. The board offered us a co-editorship, but we both felt that there could be only one chief. So I became editor-in-chief and Tony became an associate editor, together with Cecilia. There was a perverse logic in this, since both of them have deep experience with other journals in the water management and policy field and I had none. Out of this assemblage and the exigencies of processing a large backlog of manuscripts came a two-step review process that has come to be one of our prized features – a rigorous internal screening and feedback to authors followed

by a single external review for those surviving the screening. All Associate Editors, of whom there are now four (in the tyranny of alphabetical order: Yoram Eckstein, Jonathan Lautze, Naho Mirumachi and Cecilia Tortajada), are involved in this screening.

The publisher encouraged us to expand beyond four issues a year, so we went up to six and then to the current seven. Almost on a whim, I asked David Molden when he was director-general of the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) if he were interested in having us publish some of their research as a thematic special issue, and was pleasantly surprised when he said yes. That again was the beginning of something big. Little did I know. We now publish about four special issues a year, and receive more proposals than we can accept.

Seven issues a year, with over 1000 pages, is a bit much for one person to handle, especially since this is supposed to be a part-time task. So I approached Flip Wester to suggest that he become deputy editor-in-chief in charge of dealing with the open submissions, which have gone well over 200 a year, while I would take on the special issue and communications portfolios. To my delight, he said yes, and we have evolved into what is effectively a co-editorship. This gave me some freedom to focus on other matters, especially the special issues, and to work with the executive office to make use of contemporary technologies to develop the policy brief and webinars I mentioned in the lead-in to this walk down the memory aqueduct.

We now have a strong editorial team that spans generations, locations and disciplines and which has some gender representation. *Water International* has truly gone international, not only in content but also in the way it is put together and the people involved. We have actively sought to involve capable and eager young people at the beginning of their careers in our operations, from book editor (Remy Kinna) to policy briefs editor (Ellia Guy) to webinar master (Scott McKenzie). At the last World Water Congress in Edinburgh we brought together for the first time in one room all the disparate stakeholders involved in IWRA publications, including our editorial team, the executive office, the publisher, the publications committee, and our very distinguished editorial board, to explore ways in which we can create even greater synergy as *Water International* bears the proud legacy of all those editors who have preceded us, including, most importantly, the very first one, Professor Ven Te Chow, into a future that seems a bit brighter than when I first said yes.