GEMS, goals, thanks, and farewell

Michael Prather, Editor in Chief
Department of Earth System Science, University of California, Irvine

GEMS is the acronym for AGU's new interface to the peer-review editorial system that includes a wide range of features. To those of us on the editorial side of AGU journals, GEMS is a deus ex machina that allows us ready access to all relevant information about manuscripts and can easily translate our editorial intentions into appropriate action. To those of us on the author or reviewer side, GEMS gives us better options for submitting manuscripts and easier access to reviewing them. Please log onto any AGU journal and set up a GEMS password. Your GEMS account and password will apply to all AGU journals (as author, reviewer, or editor), but the information specific to any journal can only be accessed by logging in to GEMS on that particular journal. I urge you all to log in to GEMS on GRL (follow the AGU links to publications and GRL) and look at your own pending manuscripts, your reviewer tasks, or your editorial responsibilities. GEMS is a significant update to GRL's previous web-based submission and now allows a much wider range of digital formats. GEMS is part of a flexible database that is critical to AGU's path to complete digital publication beginning January 2002.

The GRL Editors worked with the Publications Committee to set ambitious year 2002 goals for speed of publication, specifically that by the end of 2002 fifty percent of papers will be published within 12 weeks of submission. This ambitious goal requires all of us -- authors, reviewers, and editors -- to adjust our habits. GRL and all AGU journals rely on the kindness of reviewers, and in general you have delivered. GRL also relies on the streamlining of the editorial process, for which we recognize that we as editors must adjust our ways (see below). GRL finally relies on the authors, and here we need to change the approach of many authors in submitting to GRL. GRL wants your best work. It should be in publishable form when submitted, contain important scientific advances, have immediate impact on the research of others, and, of course, fit in 4 pages. As authors you can expect a shift in editorial policy that includes: (1) a more aggressive policy of declining papers immediately that obviously fall outside of GRL criteria (e.g., immediacy) or are not ready for publication (e.g., are too long, have wrong formatting, need significant revisions, or have many typographical errors); (2) a new "Fast-Track" option for GRL manuscripts that would go directly from first decision to publication without return to author for preparation of final publication-ready copy; and (3) a more streamlined review process that avoids re-reviewing manuscripts and asks for revisions only if there is a good chance of acceptance. As authors, GRL needs your help in meeting these goals. The review-editorial process is not the place to clean up your manuscript. Please, submit manuscripts to GRL that you have already carefully prepared, reviewed, and edited, and that are potentially ready for immediate publication.

There are many, in addition to the editors with whom I have worked, that have greatly helped over the past four years to make GRL a top-quality, interesting journal. When I took on the job of editor in chief in 1997, GRL became a centrally managed journal with a single coherent editorial policy as directed by the Board of Editors. This conversion to central handling of all manuscripts was not always a smooth process, and my personal apologies go to many authors who suffered during this transition. The ability to work with central handling and a remote editor in chief for more than 1600 manuscripts per year with the breadth of GRL has proved challenging. It was possible only with the incredible effort of AGU Journals Publishing office and the dedication of the many GRL Editorial Assistants at AGU headquarters. The spirit of that team has kept GRL afloat through the initiation of the web-based electronic submissions and three different tracking systems (GEMS at last appears to be the acme!). I am proud to see that GRL will become a completely digital journal with the next issue, providing a searchable, on-line version as well as a paper copy for subscribers. In the development of GRL's new format I have, as editor in chief, worked closely with the production staff in preparing the GRL covers and putting together each issue, including the table of contents and the highlights. This interaction between AGU headquarters and myself always had deadlines (that I missed) and other critical paths (author-supplied covers) that made this an exciting task. I have had the pleasure of working remotely and effectively with two great production staff at AGU headquarters, Mary Hall (1997-2000) and Laura Wieglieb (2000-2001). They kept me going and made GRL look great! Thanks, Mary and Laura. Highlights would not have been possible without my assistant at UC Irvine, Iqbal Pittalwala. His perseverance and writing kept GRL Highlights going twice a month. Thank you, Iqbal.

My thanks to all the reviewers, authors, and readers for their contributions to and patience with the innovations in GRL that the editors have built up over the past four years. To those who have served you, and educated me, I am indebted to previous editors (in approximate historical order): Chuck Kolb, Curt Collins, Robert Winglee, Carl Agee, Kiyoshi Suyehiro, Fatih Eltahir, Jost Heinzenberg, Don Olson, and A. Ravishankara. My thanks also to continuing editors Brian Anderson and Jay Famiglietti, and especially to Steve Mackwell, who becomes the
new GRL Editor in Chief. It is with pleasure and perhaps a sense of relief that I welcome the new GRL Editors for 2002: Saburo Miyahara and Jose Rodriguez for atmospheres, Chris Reason for oceans, and Kristine Larson and Aldo Zollo for solid earth. Please welcome them, review promptly for them, and send them your best papers.

It has been a great run, thanks.