In December 2018 I stepped down as editor in chief of the Journal of South American Earth Sciences (Journal) after 22 years, one of the longest serving Elsevier editors in chief. Two internationally recognized scientists, Andres Folguera and Francisco Vega, assumed leadership of the Journal as co-editors in chief beginning January 2019.

Thirty years ago C.E. Macelari and N.J. Snelling recognized the need for an international medium for the publication of scientific work concerned with all aspects of the earth sciences in and around the South American continent. In 1988, as founding editors, they launched the Journal of South American Earth Sciences as a cooperative publication of Pergamon Press Ltd. (now Elsevier Science Ltd.) and the Earth Sciences and Resources Institute. In January 1992, R.B. Allen and A.E.M. Naim assumed the positions of co-executive editors. The Journal increased in size and accumulated sufficient reviewed and accepted manuscripts to fill six issues of the Journal in 1996. The Journal was becoming a scholarly success and one of the most frequently cited of the regional publications.

Unfortunately, in early 1996, the Earth Sciences and Resources Institute underwent restructuring and relocation, which resulted in the termination of their editorial and financial support for the Journal. Consequently, for many months the manuscript review process was disrupted. Fortunately, Norm Snelling generously agreed to rescue the Journal in this difficult year, and after months of dedicated work, was able to get the review process back on track. During this period of transition, the continuing support for the Journal by authors, reviewers, and subscribers, despite personal inconveniences, confirmed the need for this international publication.

In January 1997, convinced of the Journal's potential, I agreed to serve as the editor in chief. Changes included disbanding the Editorial Advisory Board and replacing it with a Board of Associate Editors. Since the editorial policy was to encourage the publication of papers of a high standard aimed at a large international audience, accepted papers had to provide a regional outlook rather than cover topics of merely local scope. Geographic coverage was expanded to include research from Mexico and the scope was expanded to include more research in the fields of tectonics, geophysics, geodynamics, paleoclimatology, and Quaternary geology. New regional editors were selected for Brazil, Venezuela, and Mexico. To further expand circulation, Elsevier and the editor in chief worked with the regional editors to offer reduced individual subscription rates for members of South American, Caribbean, Central American, and Mexican geological and geophysical societies.

In 2000 page numbers for the Journal increased from six to eight hundred pages per year published over eight issues. Steady growth was a result of increasing manuscript submissions as well as the efforts of early regional editors, including Umberto Cordani, Cinna Lomnitz, Reynaldo Charrier, Felipe Audemard and Hermann Duque-Caro. All manuscripts were copyedited to exacting standards at the Journal Editorial Office at the University of South Carolina by Connie Prynne and Marie Shervais. The Editorial Office was filled with stacks of incoming and outgoing paper envelopes with submissions and reviews from around the world, as Manuscript Managers Diana Diaz and Amy Moragues tracked documents through the review process. While the publishing standards were high, the time-intensive copyediting and all-paper review process resulted in long review turn-around times. In 2007 the average review time from manuscript receipt to acceptance was an unacceptable 110 weeks.

The Journal needed to reduce the review turn-around times, while maintaining rigorous publishing standards. The biggest breakthrough was the switch to the Elsevier electronic editing system (EES) introduced in early 2008. In addition, the responsibility for English copyediting was transferred to the manuscript authors. This required, in some cases, that authors send their papers for review by native English speakers or take advantage of commercial copyediting services. As a result, the average editorial review time dropped from 110 weeks in 2007 to 35 weeks in 2011 and 24 weeks by 2016.

The much improved review turn-around time and the appointment of a number of outstanding regional editors have led to steady growth in page numbers and impact factor for the Journal. Internationally prominent regional editors currently include Victor Ramos (Argentina), Reinhardt Fuck (Brazil), Franck Audemard (Venezuela), Camilo Montes (Colombia), and Francisco Vega (Mexico). The Journal Impact Factor published by Thomson Reuters has increased steadily over the years from 0.705 in 2006 to 1.563 in 2016. The 5-Year Impact Factor increased from 1.519 in 2008 to 1.918 in 2016, and the geology journal ranking improved from 61 of 143 in 2008 to 50 of 206 in 2016. The number of manuscripts submitted annually has also increased steadily from about 90 in 2005 to 354 in 2017.

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I am confident that the new 2019 Journal editorial team will continue to improve the standing and quality of the Journal. Dr. Emilie Wang will continue as the Elsevier publisher, and Dr. Kerry McCarney-Castle, who has been with the Journal since early 2013, will continue as the managing editor. The Journal will be guided by two outstanding scientists, Andres Folguera and Francisco Vega, as co-editors in chief.

Francisco J Vega is a Mexican paleontologist, working as researcher at the Geology Institute of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) since 1985. He obtained a PhD in 1988 at UNAM, where he began to publish about his main field of expertise: the study of fossil crustaceans and molluscs. Francisco also has research contributions on Chicxulub impact ejecta deposits, as well as on the regional geology and stratigraphy of NE Mexico. More recently, he and his students have made important contributions to the stratigraphy, paleoenvironment and biota preserved in the Miocene Chiapas amber. His experience as editor includes the Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Geológicas, Boletín de la Sociedad Geológica Mexicana and Paleontología Mexicana. He is the main editor of the book Studies on Mexican Paleontology, and has about 130 papers in SCI journals. He has served as President of the Mexican Paleontological Society and is currently Head of the Department of Lithospheric Processes of the Geology Institute, UNAM.

Andres Folguera is Principal Researcher for Conicet (Consejo Nacional de Investigación Científica - National Council for Scientific Investigation) in Argentina, and Professor of geodynamics, geotectonics and Andean tectonics at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). Since earning his PhD degree at UBA in 2002, his research has focused on unravelling the different phases associated with the uplift and extensional relaxation of the southern Andes. This research involved mapping, structural and geophysical methods to determine synextensional and syncontractional sequences and arc dynamics as a proxy to infer sub lithospheric controls. Andres has served as President of the Argentine Geological Association and Coordinator or Member of numerous scientific committees. Andres is a Member of the Scientific Committee for Revista de la Sociedad Geológica de España, Review Editor for Frontiers in Earth Science, Associate Editor for Brazilian Journal of Geology, and Guest Editor for Special Issues in the Journal of South American Earth Sciences. He has edited 9 books and special issues of journals, including Andean Tectonics, evolution of the Neuquén Basin, Growth of the Southern Andes, and the Tectonic evolution of Patagonian Basins.

One of the goals of the Journal will be to reach an even larger audience of South American geologists as well as other geoscientists interested in working in this part of the world. It will continue to be offered at an affordable price and gradually increase in page numbers, while still maintaining the rigorous publishing standards of Elsevier Journals. The new co-editors in chief are excited about the future of the Journal of South American Earth Sciences and invite you to join their efforts to expand its success as the premier place to discover the latest scientific findings from this dynamic part of the world.

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