

COMMENTS FROM THE *JOURNAL* EDITOR ABOUT CONVENTION ABSTRACTS

THE ABSTRACT AS A PERMANENT RECORD

Each year, the *Journal of Cave and Karst Studies* publishes the abstracts from the annual national convention of the National Speleological Society. This collection is our official archive recording the recent activity in a variety of speleological fields ranging from archaeology to exploration to photography. Unlike the *Convention Program* or the *NSS News*, the *Journal* is listed in a variety of scientific bibliographies. Anyone looking for information on caves in granite can find numerous references to the *Journal* on Georef or in a variety of other geology reference materials. Cavers preparing abstracts for the convention (and, unfortunately, the session chairs) sometimes forget that the abstract is more than an invitation, or “teaser” to entice an audience. It is also a permanent record, a summary of all the substantial information one plans to present.

While the *Journal* does not wish to limit the types of presentations made at convention, we would like members to understand the requirements of our publication and the reasons for them.

HOW THE *JOURNAL* “SELECTS” ABSTRACTS

The *Journal* has to limit the number of pages devoted to abstracts and, hence, readers may note that the abstracts published from the 1995 Blacksburg convention (this issue) and those published from the 1996 Salida convention (v. 58, n. 3) were “selected” and edited. Several criteria were used.

Calls for Papers for conventions require that abstracts be limited to 250 words. While this limit was pretty strictly enforced by the 1996 staff, many session chairs are more lenient and publish lengthier abstracts in the *Convention Program*. While this policy seems generous, it causes problems when the abstract is passed along to the *Journal* staff. We must limit the abstract to 250 words. Thus, some abstracts are eliminated as too lengthy and others are edited down. Unfortunately, the people most qualified to cut out words are the author and session chair. When they fail to do so, we are forced to make the changes, often in fields where we have no expertise.

Both the 1995 and 1996 abstracts included many promises. Sentences that started with “This paper describes...” or “The results will be presented...” were cut out. If an abstract was left with nothing of substance, it was eliminated. Too often an abstract will say, “Discussion will be on how to...” instead of actually summarizing the technique. A promise is nearly worthless but a summary has value to future readers.

The paper must have been presented at the convention and the abstract needed to be submitted before the convention. Although the *Journal* staff has to rely on the convention committee for this information, it is inappropriate to publish abstracts of papers for promised speakers who failed to make their presentation or for abstracts that were not submitted prior to the convention.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS OF THE *JOURNAL*

While preparing an abstract for the convention, we ask you to consider some other requirements of the *Journal*. Like nearly all scholarly publications, we use metric. Please use, or at least include, metric in each abstract.

A scholarly abstract should always include a mailing address. Professional affiliation and Internet address are also commonly included.

Avoid abbreviations. While everyone in the cave rescue session may know what NCRC means, most non-cavers who might look up the abstract after finding a reference to it in a mountain rescue book probably will not. Likewise, it may be safe to assume that the geologists in the geology session know what the USGS is but a “geology-challenged” caver who reads the *Journal* may be clueless.

A WORD OF THANKS

Finally, we would like to thank Norma Peacock for her service as the Convention Abstract Editor of the *Journal* and, formerly, *The NSS Bulletin*. Norma has chosen to make this issue her last and we appreciate her years of service.

Louise D. Hose, Editor