

EDITORIAL

Indexing the Journal of Cave and Karst Studies: The beginning, the ending, and the digital era

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In 1984 I was a new graduate student in geology at Penn State. I had been a caver and an NSS member for years, and I wanted to study karst. The only cave geology course I had taken was a 1-week event taught by Art Palmer at Mammoth Cave. I knew that I had to familiarize myself with the literature in order to do my thesis, and that the *NSS Bulletin* was the major outlet for cave and karst related papers (Table 1). So, in order to “get up to speed” I undertook to read every issue of the *NSS Bulletin*, from the personal library of my advisor, Will White, starting with volume 1 (1940). When I got through volume 3, I realized that, although I was absorbing a lot of the material, it would be difficult for me to relocate specific information again, because there was no comprehensive index available¹. So, I decided to create an index as I read. This was the beginning of a 25-year effort to catalog the literature of the NSS for use by the scientific community.

Keith Wheeland from the Nittany Grotto told me about a computer program called KWIC (Key Word In Context), and this seemed appropriate to the task. Sitting in front of a terminal for an IBM 4341 mainframe computer running VM/CMS I would read through the journals, and enter keywords and control characters in a prescribed format in a text file. Cave names and states, of course, were important. Other terms included organism names, scientific disciplines covered, etc. I indexed volumes 1 through 45 of the *Bulletin*, along with the four *Occasional Papers of the*

NSS. The effort took about 2,000 hours, and was published in 1986 by the NSS.

With the encouragement of Editor Andrew Flurkey I regularly compiled an annual index that was included in the final issue for each volume starting in 1987. The *Bulletin* went through name changes, and is currently the *Journal of Cave and Karst Studies* (Table 1). In 1988 I began using a custom-designed entry program called SDI-Soft, written by Keith Wheeland, which later became his comprehensive software package KWIX. A 5-year compilation index (volumes 46–50) was issued by the NSS in 1991. In 2003 all of the data files were used by Paul Stevens to create a searchable online database for the NSS website. With Paul’s untimely death, and reorganization of the NSS webpages, this database appears to no longer be available.

Two things have happened in recent years that reduce the importance of an annual index. First, in 2002 the *Journal of Cave and Karst Studies* (the *Journal*) became included in the Science Citations Index. This massive database is an online resource that indexes and abstracts over 3,700 prominent journals. Inclusion of the *Journal* in this database makes the contents available to the many institutions that subscribe to this service. Secondly, the rise of comprehensive search engines such as Google, along with an increased presence of the *Journal* on the World Wide Web, places the full-text contents of the journal at the fingertips of all karst scientists.

These changes mean that the annual index no longer fills a critical role. So, with the close of volume 70 in 2008, I will discontinue this effort. Through the years I indexed over 8,000 pages of scientific articles (Figure 1), represent-

¹There were 2 semi-comprehensive indexes available at the time this project began. Ralph Stone prepared the first index, which covered volumes 1 through 6. The second index was by G.F. Jackson and included volumes 1 through 20.

Table 1. Names, volumes, and dates for the scientific journal of the National Speleological Society.

Scientific Journal Name	Volumes and Dates
<i>Bulletin of the Speleological Society of the District of Columbia</i>	Vol. 1 (1940)
<i>Bulletin of the National Speleological Society</i>	Vol. 2 (1941) through Vol. 13 (1951)
<i>The American Caver — Bulletin of the National Speleological Society</i>	Vol. 14 (1952) through Vol. 16 (1954)
<i>Bulletin of the National Speleological Society</i>	Vol. 17 (1955) through Vol. 35 (1973)
<i>The NSS Bulletin — Quarterly Journal of the National Speleological Society</i>	Vol. 36 (1974) through Vol. 45 no. 2 (1983)
<i>The NSS Bulletin — A Quarterly Journal of Caves and Karst</i>	Vol. 45 no. 3 (1983) through Vol. 45 no. 4 (1983)
<i>The NSS Bulletin — Journal of Caves and Karst Studies</i>	Vol. 46 (1984) through Vol. 57 (1995)
<i>Journal of Cave and Karst Studies - The National Speleological Society Bulletin</i>	Vol. 58 (1996) through Vol. 59 (1997)
<i>Journal of Cave and Karst Studies</i>	Vol. 60 (1998) through Vol. 70 (present)

Pages published per volume of JCKS

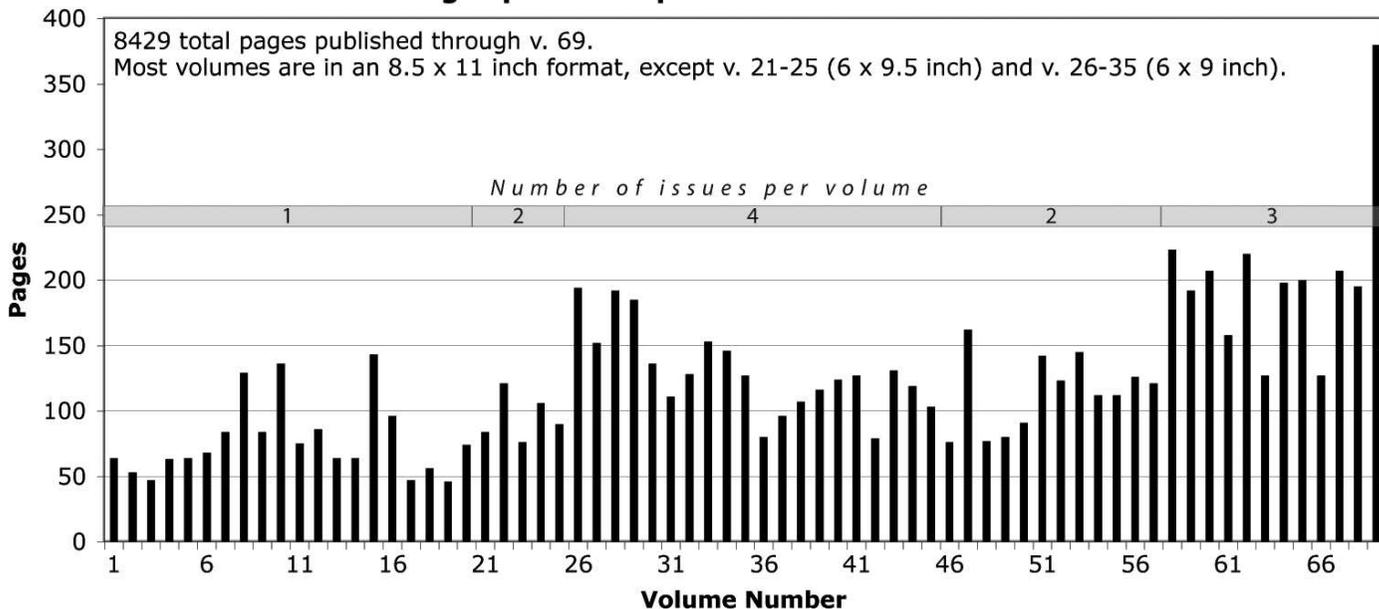


Figure 1. Histogram showing number of pages published per volume of the Journal for the last 69 years, along with other data on the Journal.

ing 65 cm (26 inches) of journals on the shelf. The work was only possible with the collaboration of the NSS and journal editors Andrew Flurkey, Louise Hose, and Malcolm Field. In addition, Will White, Keith Wheeland,

Keena Tomko, Elaine Butcher, Kathy Sasowsky, Claire Sasowsky, and Megan Curry assisted in various ways throughout the years — their help is gratefully acknowledged.