



Editorial – Suggestions for authors on preparing submissions for IJCG

Dear Authors,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for choosing International Journal of Coal Geology (IJCG) to publish your work. We appreciate that any paper you prepare and submit is very important to you, as well as for science, since it represents your research and the time and effort that went into it behind the scenes. Your choice of IJCG as the best scientific journal to showcase it to the rest of the community is truly honoring.

Writing a technical paper is never easy. Especially after an exhausting period of research, it is understandable that even the most experienced researchers and technical writers will be eager to write their paper and get it published as soon as possible. However, during this state of urgency, sometimes small, but very important, aspects of a paper that can define whether it continues its journey are neglected and may lead to the paper being rejected, either before or after review. We, as Editors of IJCG and our team at Elsevier, care about each paper and would like to help you to accomplish your publication objective. We also care about the technical and editorial quality of IJCG. Thus we wanted to give you some guidance with this short note about preparation and submission of your paper.

Firstly, it is important to choose the right journal for your paper, and each researcher or academic institution will have their own set of criteria to assess this. However, we feel the scope of the journal to be the key consideration, and that it is important for authors to pay attention to this, even before starting to write their paper. If the scope of the paper and the journal are poorly aligned, the paper will not reach the appropriate audience that would otherwise benefit from it, and authors will not get the credit and recognition they desire either. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to check the aims and scope of IJCG before submitting your work, available at the following link:

<http://www.journals.elsevier.com/international-journal-of-coal-geology/>.

The scope of the journal also defines the basic requirements of papers which must be present in order for the paper to be considered for publication. For instance, for IJCG, papers should at the very least contain a general description of the geology and sample properties, and include related maps. Regardless of whether the work described is field work, sample analyses in the laboratory, or a numerical study, it is important to establish the full picture for the readers so they can review the findings in the context of the geological setting.

Related to scope, as editors we often encounter cases where highly inter-related research are split between different papers which are then submitted to one or several journals. The danger of doing this is that, by dividing up research on the same, related, or complementary samples/study areas/methods, the overall quality and the impact of the scientific results, as well as the integrity of the work, may be

compromised. Such papers are vulnerable to questions and criticisms from editors and reviewers since there will be noticeable gaps and missing information throughout the paper. Therefore, we encourage you to submit the fullest possible papers to IJCG and to avoid splitting your work unless it is ethical, logical and necessary to do so.

All of us have heard the importance of creating a good first impression in job interviews and when meeting new people. The situation is no different, and perhaps even more acute, for submitted papers, since there is no guarantee that a submitted paper will be sent out for review. Therefore, putting effort and care into the preparation of your manuscript shows your seriousness about publishing with IJCG. Before a paper is sent out for review, the administrative screening agent will check the paper for completeness, and one of the Chief Editors will check that the paper meets the scope and quality requirements of the journal. We ask you to please pay close attention to the journal Guide for Authors in the preparation of your paper:

<http://www.elsevier.com/journals/international-journal-of-coal-geology/0166-5162/guide-for-authors>.

Be sure to review the Guide for Authors before preparing each new submission as it is updated on an ongoing basis as and when new initiatives are launched. For instance, we have recently included an explanation of the “Free Reference Style” initiative, giving authors the option to submit references in any style (provided all references within a given paper are in the same style and complete), which references are converted to the journal style by Elsevier later in the production process.

IJCG has a diverse author spectrum in terms of nationalities and native languages, of which we are very proud. We continue to be impressed with the scientific excellence of our existing authors, and new authors joining the IJCG community every day. However, the way in which this science is expressed, i.e. written English, is critical in the decision of whether the paper will be sent out for review. A poorly written paper will not communicate your message effectively to the Editor, reviewers, or readers, can detract from otherwise good science, and can lead to fundamental misunderstandings about the research and findings. We are aware that it is not realistic to expect all authors to have flawless written English, but we do expect to receive submissions with a good level of English, free of grammatical and typographical errors, and with well-structured sentences. Therefore, if you think that your written English skills do not meet international publication standards, please have your paper revised by a native speaker, or by a professional technical editor, to ensure that the work, in which you have invested so much time and effort, does not fall at the first hurdle.

Although the importance of references is often overlooked, at IJCG we believe references are one of the most integral and important parts of any scientific paper and pay close attention to the references selected by authors. Cited references show an author's awareness and

perspective about the research activity that is going on internationally and his/her ability to select the most important work that lays the foundation for the author's own work. Citing recent work, in addition to older but seminal research, shows that the author is following the literature and understands the state of the art of the research area. In reality, authors have the liberty to select any reference to cite and we do not enforce citation of a particular paper as a condition for acceptance. However, we do ask that cited papers be accessible to international readership and are from credible, peer-reviewed sources, such as international journals. Therefore, papers published in local venues, such as conferences, and in languages other than English, are not preferred.

Before closing, perhaps we should reiterate that the purpose of the review process is certainly not to criticize a paper, but rather to ensure that accepted papers are of the highest scientific and editorial quality. This is not only good for the field and science in general, but also for authors since the review process identifies areas of improvement. Bearing in mind reviewers are selected for their expertise in the field of the paper, authors should see reviews as valuable feedback, and the revision process as an opportunity to improve their paper, so the final published paper will be the best reflection and expression of their work. If you should receive a revise decision, please do address all reviewer comments in your revised paper and/or response letter.

Writing a technical paper is never easy, as stated in the opening paragraphs. There is so much to learn through experience or under mentorship of researchers with a wealth of publishing experience. For those of you who are at early stages of your careers, or who do not have access to a mentor, educating yourself in good writing practices and in preparing a submission will be fundamental for your success in

getting published with IJCG. Please take a few minutes of your time to see the webcasts given in the following link. Those few minutes may actually save you days, if not weeks or months, and will certainly help you to achieve your publication goals.

<http://www.elsevier.com/journal-authors/elsevier-supporting-early-career-researchers/publishing-connect-training-webcasts>.

Thank you for reading this note. We hope that you have found it informative and that it helps you to develop your papers in line with the criteria we use to assess submissions to IJCG.

C. Ozgen Karacan*

*NIOSH, Pittsburgh Research Laboratory, P.O. Box 18070,
Pittsburgh PA 15236-0070, United States*

*Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 412 3864008.

E-mail address: cok6@cdc.gov.

Shifeng Dai

*China University of Mining and Technology,
State Key Laboratory of Coal Resources and Safe Mining,
D11, Xueyuan Road, Haidian District, Beijing, 100083, China*

E-mail address: daishifeng@gmail.com.

Ralf Littke

*RWTH Aachen University, Geology and Geochemistry of Petroleum and Coal,
Lochnerstr. 4-20, D-52056 Aachen, 52056, Germany*

E-mail address: ralf.littke@emr.rwth-aachen.de.