

## The Case for a Physical Journal

A scientific journal serves a number of useful purposes and can attract the attention of very different types of readers. Scientific journals advance research by providing scientists with access to the data and analyses of others in their field. They also provide researchers in universities and elsewhere with a means of demonstrating to their employers that their research is valued by their peers, who have approved their work for publication. A journal's very existence can serve as visible evidence of the significance of a field of research, particularly in a new or interdisciplinary arena, and thus can both highlight and advance the fledgling field. Finally, in some fields, a journal can be a vital link between scientists conducting research and individuals in management and decision-making positions who can profit by knowing the results of the research.

*Weather, Climate, and Society* serves all these purposes. It is one of a very small number of scientific journals that focuses on the nexus between meteorological and climate phenomena and society. The fact that its sponsor is the American Meteorological Society, a not-for-profit scientific organization with a proven, long-term record of producing high quality scientific journals, means that both the new field of social science research on climate and weather and the articles published in the journal are taken seriously in the broader scientific and the academic communities.

But an important question is why the journal is published in both a hard-copy edition and an online edition. For some time, it has been clear that scientists locate and read scholarly articles online in preference to thumbing through articles in physical journals. In most cases, the version of record is the digital version, which is linked to other sources of information that are valuable to the reader. However, the preference of scientists for online journals does not mean that there is no longer a role for the physical journal.

In many cases, a scientific journal that encompasses a new research field, such as the interactions of weather and climate with society, has a potentially broader readership than journals in more well-established scientific fields. This readership may span multiple communities. For *Weather, Climate, and Society*, the readership comes from the scientific, educational, policy, and meteorological communities. Such a broad range of readers benefits from the flexibility of a physical journal. The reading needs of policy makers and managers in both the public and private sectors are often different from the reading needs of scientists and students. A physical journal, particularly one with an eye-catching cover, attracts new and nontraditional readers and demands to be picked up and read. Articles in a physical journal are more accessible for perusal in short bursts of time, such as on the subway, over lunch, or during a break. And the journal can be physically circulated to other potential readers, who might not otherwise have the time or incentive to search it out on the Internet.

It is virtually certain that physical journals will eventually disappear. The costs associated with the publication, mailing, and storage of print media will ultimately overwhelm the tactile and aesthetic benefits of holding the most recent issue of a journal in one's hands and passing it on to a time-pressed colleague. But for now, we are privileged to have both an online and a physical version of *Weather, Climate, and Society*. So take advantage of the situation and lend your copy to someone who might not otherwise see the journal. We will all benefit from broadening our readership into new communities.

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