

Journal of the Bulgarian Geographical Society: the new vision and perspectives

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1. Background

The Journal of Bulgarian Geographical Society was the first scientific geographical journal in the country established in 1933. During the long period of its development, it became a leading journal for publishing scientific results in geography and related interdisciplinary fields in Bulgaria. From its early years, the journal was considered as “an indicator of the development of the Bulgarian geographical science” and an important means for extending the international relations of the Society (Batakliiev 1942). The development of the journal can be divided into three periods. The first period between 1933 and 1943 saw the publication of 10 issues and 238 papers (Table 1). Most of the publications during this period are of high quality and original research contributions, and in certain cases these publications are pioneering in some areas of geographical science in the country. The publications during this period are mainly in Bulgarian and the rest in German (about 6%), while the abstracts of the papers are in German and French. During this period papers accounted for about 45% of all publications. Other published materials during this period included reviews (about 25%), editorials, biographies and other publications mainly on Society activities. The end of the first period is marked by the political changes that took place in the country after 1944, which badly affect the activities of the Society and the result was an interruption of the journal publishing for the next 10 years.

Table 1. Development of the Journal of Bulgarian Geographical Society.

Period	Time	Number of issues	Number of publications
First	1933-1943	10	238
Second	1953-1993	28	584
Third	2018-2020	5	91

The second period covers the time from 1953 to 1993. This was the most productive period, but also one that was highly affected by the political changes in the country after the Second World War. The influence of communist propaganda can be found in the first editorial paper and the symbolic restart of the numbering of the journal's issues (Fig. 1B). In the beginning of this period the Journal



Figure 1. Front covers of selected journal issues across different periods: A – Volume 2/1934, First period (1933-1943); B – Volume 30/1982, Second period (1953-1993); C – Volume 42/2020, Third period (2018-2020); D – Current (2021).

issues were not published regularly (only 4 issues between 1953 and 1964) and only after 1964 did the publishing become annual. The papers during this period were published only in Bulgarian, but the abstracts were in German, French and English. The share of the research papers rose to almost 60% but the number of other publications remained high, with a propaganda materials being published at the expense of specific society materials. After 1989 the society's activities declined, publishing of the journal was interrupted in 1993, and in 2001 it collapsed.

The third period starts after the reestablishment of the Bulgarian Geographical Society in 2014 and the first issue in this period marks the 100th anniversary of the Society in 2018 (Nedkov et al. 2020). Although this period is relatively short, publishing has been active and for the first time in its history the journal managed to publish two issues per year. The editorial policy has changed towards an international audience by adopting English language as standard for the main elements (title, abstract, figure captions). The papers in English gradually increased up to 20% by 2020. The share of research papers slightly increased up to 65% and the journal continues to publish review and conceptual papers.

The current challenge of the journal is to build on its status as a leading national geographical journal by expanding its international content and recognition. This necessitates particular changes including precise identification of the aims and scope of the journal, clarification of the themes covered by the journal towards new and innovative topics, improvement of the publishing process, collaboration and agreement with international publisher, and development of new website.

2. The new mission

In the autumn of 2020, the editorial team and the executive committee of the Bulgarian Geographical Society agreed upon a new mission of the journal. It aims to respond and to adapt to the newest developments in scholarly publishing by providing a platform for high-quality and innovative papers in all fields of geography and interrelated fields of earth, ecological, social, economic, and geoinformation sciences. The geographical scope of the journal will cover the entire world with special attention to Southeastern Europe and the Balkans.

The specific thematic scope of the journal covers five general topics:

1. Physical Geography

The journal traditionally covers all aspects of the main physical-geography fields such as Geomorphology, Climatology, Hydrology, Pedology, Biogeography but also some aspect of Oceanography, Paleogeography and Glaciology. The aim now is to extend this topic towards the spatial aspect of Climate Change, Coastal and Marine studies.

2. Human Geography

The main fields covered in this topic so far include all aspects of Economic Geography, Social Geography, Rural Geography, Demography and Migrations. The spatial aspects of Cultural Geography, Health and Medical Geography, Urban Geography, Transportation Geography are also of special interest to the journal. The aim in this topic is to extend the scope with new and more practically oriented fields such as Applied Geography, Development Geographies, and Human Dimensions of Climate Change.

3. Geographic Education

The papers on Geographic Education can cover all methodological aspects of teaching in all levels secondary school to university.

4. Geographic technics

This topic includes classical Cartography studies together with the integration of modern geoinformation technology through the fields of GIS and Remote Sensing. Spatial Analyses and Modeling. The new vision for the journal's development focuses on attracting more works in the fields of Spatial Analyses and Modeling, Big Data, Spatial Statistics, Cognition of Geographic Information.

5. Interdisciplinary studies

The interdisciplinary studies have been traditionally covered by the journal through the fields of Regional studies, Tourism, Environmental Protection and Nature Conservation and more recently by Landscape Ecology, Natural and Technological Hazards, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

Papers may address these topics from different perspectives including basic research, integrated approaches, conceptual

approaches and policy evaluation. The strategy to achieve the aims of the journal includes publishing the following types of articles:

1. *Original research article* (up to 10 000 words)
This is the most important type of scientific paper which provides unique information based on original-research design and it is strongly recommended to follow the IMRAD (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion) structure.
2. *Review article* (up to 12 000 words)
Review articles expand on knowledge that has been previously communicated by others through revisiting, analyzing, synthesizing and presenting it in a new light. The systematic review approach is recommended.
3. *Short communication* (up to 3000 words)
Short communications can present: preliminary results of initial research findings that are not yet ready for full publishing; short pieces commenting on topics of interest to the wide geographical readership; conceptual papers on specific topics within the scope of the journal.
4. *Editorial* (up to 3000 words)
Editorials are prepared by the journal editors or guest editors in a form of a short review of the publications in an issue or presentation of the journal policy.
5. *Correspondence* (up to 1000 words)
Correspondence can be written in response to a recent article published in the journal. The authors of the discussed article will be given opportunity to respond.
6. *Book review* (up to 800 words)
7. *Special issue papers* (up to 10 000 words).

The publishing process of the journal is now organized on Pensoft's next-generation publishing platform ARPHA (Authoring, Reviewing, Publishing, Hosting, and Archiving). It is a publishing solution that supports the full life cycle of a manuscript, from authoring and reviewing to publishing and dissemination. ARPHA can supply a modernized look-and-feel, while respecting a journal's established identity. The new website of the journal (<https://jbgs.arphahub.com/>) enables easy and fast access of the users as well as well-organized internal system for online submission, management and revision of the manuscripts. The review process will be organized using double-blind approach by independent anonymous reviewers. Alongside its advanced publishing technologies and comprehensive accompanying services, the platform offers consultancy in transitioning to Open Access. The journal will share the open access policy by providing immediate open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge. Open Science provides better transparency and reproducibility of results (Reichman et al. 2011) and for geography and earth sciences it could be a baseline against which future environmental change can be evaluated.

3. Perspectives

Geography of the 21st century is expected to contribute to the development of human capital and the knowledge society, to offer place-specific solutions for sustainable regional development and use of the planet's natural and human capital (Nedkov et al. 2020). One of the main goals of the Bulgarian Geographical Society is to stimulate the geographic community to search for smart spatial solutions which can contribute to meet the challenges of modern society. The Journal of the Bulgarian Geographical Society will contribute to the achievement of this goal by providing a platform for scientists in the main fields of geography and the interrelated sciences as well as decision-makers, and the interested public to share their knowledge in an efficient and open manner. In these days of continuous speed-

ing up of paces of work and life, the idea of facilitating the sharing of existing knowledge in order to create synergies, new knowledge, and innovation is more than timely and our journal can join the efforts to achieve these goals.

The main challenges for the future development of the journal are: (i) to attract high quality and innovative research articles from around the world which can ensure its indexation and referencing in the world scientific databases; (ii) to develop a precise peer-review process in a constructive, helpful critical, and fair way which can guarantee the quality of the accepted manuscripts; (iii) to develop well organized editorial management, and fast and flexible publishing process that facilitates good services for the authors; (iv) to increase the quality of scientific publishing of the geographic community in Bulgaria by providing the opportunity to share knowledge and experience with the international scientific community.

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