

Editorial

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New perspectives for Netherlands Journal of Geosciences - Editorial

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Introduction

In 2025, Netherlands Journal of Geosciences (NJG) moved from Cambridge University Press to Open Academia. The practicalities of this move, particularly rebuilding the website, provided a natural opportunity for the editorial team to assess the journal's scope and direction. In this editorial, I would like to share some of our key findings and resulting actions. I will also share news about a team vacancy and recent NJG Publication Awards.

Scope

In the past, NJG was a general geological journal published by the Royal Geological and Mining Society of the Netherlands (KNGMG). It represented and served the Dutch Earth science community as a whole, and its scope covered many of the regions and subjects studied by that community. It also attracted manuscripts from universities in countries where the Dutch Earth science community was active or with which it collaborated. It was only when NJG was merged with the journal of the Geological Survey of the Netherlands around the turn of the century that it evolved into the regional journal it is today.

In fact, the journal has developed a narrower regional focus than intended, with most papers concerning the Netherlands and, occasionally, its neighbouring countries in Europe. It is often forgotten that the Kingdom of the Netherlands also extends into the Caribbean, where it shares borders with Venezuela, French Saint Martin, Anguilla, Saint Kitts and Nevis, the Dominican Republic, the British Virgin Islands, and the United States Virgin Islands.

We have therefore reformulated the scope as follows (NJG, 2026a): "Netherlands Journal of Geosciences (NJG) is a fully open-access, peer-reviewed scholarly journal that publishes new and significant research in the geosciences, with a regional focus on the Netherlands, including the Dutch offshore and the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. The journal also welcomes studies of adjacent areas and other regions that are relevant to the understanding of the geology of the Netherlands. NJG covers a wide range of topics, including geology, physical geography, geophysics, geo-archaeology, palaeontology, hydrogeology, exploration, mapping, modelling, and visualisation."

The new scope now more explicitly extends the geological focus to oceanic and active-margin settings and significantly enlarges the category of "other regions relevant to the understanding of the geology of the Netherlands", whether in strictly geological terms or in terms of applications, resources and hazards.

Subject areas

Another way to assess the scope of the journal is through its published content. We categorised all papers published in volumes 99 through 104, covering the years 2020 to 2025, into seven clusters (Figure 1). Both the categorisation of individual papers and the categories themselves are somewhat arbitrary, but provide a basis for a qualitative comparison with what might be expected given the geology, subsurface use and characteristics of the geoscience sector in the Netherlands.

In that respect, the combined share of "subsurface and exploration geology; stratigraphy" and "geophysics; measuring and monitoring" seems to provide a fair representation of the research conducted in the Netherlands on geo-energy and the energy transition. The somewhat smaller but still substantial share devoted to the surface and shallow subsurface also seems reasonable, given the geology and geography of the Netherlands.

A few things stand out. The fact that about one quarter of the papers are palaeontological is not a matter of journal priorities, but reflects a particularly successful special collection and a prolific community that consistently chooses NJG as their outlet. Education, though important, is not a priority topic for NJG either. Its appearance as a distinct category is due to a special issue currently under development, with focus on the state-of-affairs and future prospects of Earth sciences education at Dutch universities.

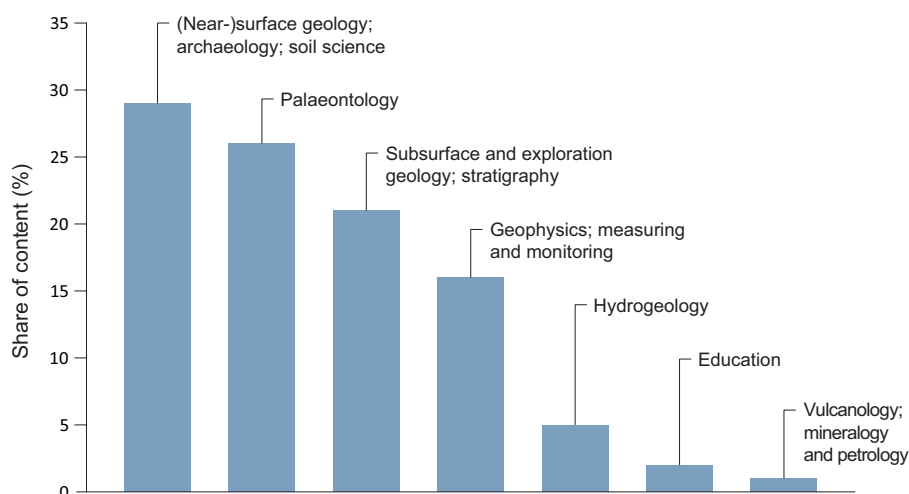


Figure 1. The proportions of subject categories in peer-reviewed NJG papers (2020-2025).

Water is a key research and policy area in the Netherlands, but has historically been underrepresented in the journal. All but one of the papers included in the statistics are contributions to a special collection initiated to increase the share of hydrogeological papers. We would like to see more contributions in this subject area, but once the special collection is complete, we expect that this will require active solicitation.

The share of volcanological, mineralogical and petrological work in NJG is disproportionately low, given that the Kingdom of the Netherlands includes two exposed plutons (in Aruba and Sint Maarten), two active volcanoes (on Saba and Sint Eustatius), and volcanic deposits on all the Dutch Caribbean islands. The scope of NJG has been reformulated with these facts in mind.

Data papers as a new section

Geological data and information acquired or produced for academic research or official information programmes are generally published because there is a strong incentive or obligation to do so. By contrast, data acquired through commercial or otherwise one-off research, exploration, monitoring or survey activities are more likely to end up in reports or unmanaged databases. To facilitate and promote the preservation and reuse of such disperse datasets, NJG has introduced a new section of Data Papers. These describe “a dataset or other reusable research resource, such as a map, model or codebase, focusing on its creation, structure, documentation, quality and potential for reuse rather than on presenting substantive research findings or analyses” (NJG, 2026a).

The development of the Data Papers section also prompted a review of the data-related sections of NJG’s Journal Policies (NJG, 2026b): “As requirements for open data are becoming increasingly common, all NJG authors—not only those submitting Data Papers—are strongly encouraged to make their data openly available and to adhere to the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable). For Data Papers, the requirements are more stringent and include provisions concerning data quality, metadata, discoverability, and the long-term reliability, continuity and sustainability of the repository used.” Eventually, such regulations should apply to all data that is provided outside of tables and appendices, in which case NJG itself is the repository.

The above content analysis also revealed that only 4% of the included papers have a first author working in industry. While recognising the limited incentives for industry geoscientists to conduct original research and the confidentiality of much of their data, we expect that the Data Paper section will provide a low-barrier opportunity for them to publish in NJG. The editorial team thanks Dr Ronald Pijnenburg for helping us setting up the Data Papers section, building on his experience as project manager of the Dutch contribution to the EPOS research data infrastructure.

Special collections

Since 2018, NJG has run themed special collections (NJG, 2026c), developed over a set period, with articles published online upon acceptance. As successors to the former special issues, they serve to mobilise specific groups of authors, typically bringing together the results of specific programmes or conferences. Four special collections have been completed so far: on geothermal energy (2019–2020), drowned palaeo-landscapes (2020–2022), induced seismicity (2022–2023), and Maastrichtian palaeontology (2024).

Four collections are currently under development. Two of these are nearly completed and closed for submissions: *Groundwater and sustainability transitions* (edited by Niels Hartog, Victor Bense, Perry de Louw and Hanneke Verweij), and *The Dark Ages of the Lowlands* (edited by Wim Hoek and Harm Jan Pierik). *Recent past, present and future of Earth sciences education in the Netherlands* (edited by Hans de Bresser and Maarten Kleinhans; NJG, 2026e), and *Land subsidence in the Netherlands* (edited by Sanneke van Asselen and Kay Koster; NJG, 2026f) are still accepting contributions.

One new special collection has been initiated this year: *Geological mapping in the 21st century*, edited by Bob Hoogendoorn and Kris Piessens (NJG, 2026d). It is dedicated to the science—and art—of geological mapping and will include papers on the scientific underpinning of recent Dutch geological maps, covering conceptual, methodological and, of course, geological aspects. Most papers are expected to fall within the new Data Paper section.

Policy for the use of AI and LLMs

NJG recently encountered its first case of AI misuse, involving a hallucinated reference. It was an honest mistake, reported by the authors themselves, but it prompted the inclusion of an AI clause in NJG's Journal Policies (NJG, 2026b): "The journal recognises that AI and large language models (LLMs) can be used responsibly to assist in research and manuscript preparation. All use of AI must be fully disclosed by the authors, including text generation, data analysis, or figure creation. AI must not replace the independent scholarly judgement of the authors, and any content generated or substantially modified by AI must be appropriately attributed. Manuscripts in which AI use is undisclosed, misrepresented, or used inappropriately may be withdrawn from the editorial process. Allegations of improper AI use, including misattribution or undisclosed reliance on AI, will be investigated in accordance with COPE guidelines. Manuscripts may be subject to screening or checks to ensure compliance."

Fully enforcing this policy requires more resources than the editorial team of an academic journal can reasonably be expected to possess on its own. Moreover, the detection of AI-generated content is notoriously, and perhaps intrinsically, unreliable (Weber-Wulff et al., 2023). We emphasise disclosure to make the use of AI explicit and assessable (Hosseini et al., 2023) and, where misuse is concerned, rely heavily on the policies of the organisations that employ the authors. Controlling AI while making the best use of its potential is a joint effort by the scientific community at large, within the broader framework of research integrity (e.g. KNAW et al., 2018), and should focus on preventing rather than trying to police misconduct.

Peer review timelines

Persistent delays in the peer review of manuscripts led us to include the following statement in the Instructions for Authors (NJG, 2026g): "Like all scientific journals, NJG is facing increasing difficulties in finding reviewers and obtaining reviews

within a reasonable timeframe. This reflects what has become known as the peer review crisis (e.g. Horta & Jung, 2024), which is widely discussed in the scholarly publishing community and is attributed to a growing volume of manuscript submissions and reviewer fatigue. The editorial team is doing its best to process manuscripts in a timely manner. However, as we cannot compel reviewers to undertake this voluntary work, we ask for your understanding if the review process takes longer than expected." The underlying systemic problem is not something our editorial team can solve on its own, so the best thing we can do is manage expectations.

Publication fees

At Open Academia, publishing an NJG article incurs a charge of EUR 140 per page. It is too early to determine whether the charge presents a barrier to publication (in fact, we are seeing an increase in submissions). The Editor-in-Chief has discretion to waive the page charges. Requests for waivers have been few and reasonable, although on some occasions it has been necessary to explain that a low project or personal budget is not, in itself, a reason for a waiver if the author works for a well-funded organisation. Obviously, the main reason for granting a waiver is to avoid missing a valuable contribution to the journal.

Recent NJG Awards

The NJG Publication Award, established in 2003, recognises outstanding contributions to the journal (NJG, 2026h). The recipient is selected by the editorial team. The 2025 award was given to Loes Buijze for her insightful paper on the effects of subsurface use in the context of the energy transition (Buijze et al., 2023). The 2026 award went to Titus Kruijssen for his unconventional and thorough analysis of the historical hydrological development of Curaçao (Kruijssen et al., 2024; Figure 2).



Figure 2. The certificate of the 2026 NJG Award.

Editorial team

As the new Editor-in-Chief, I was happy to find a seasoned editorial team already in place, covering all subject areas within the scope of the journal. Dr Fred Beekman has decided to step down after serving for a decade. We thank him for his diligence and expertise! We will be looking for a new associate editor with expertise in tectonics and geophysics.

Outlook

Over the past year, the transition from Cambridge University Press to Open Academia has prompted the editorial team to take several steps to increase both the quantity and quality of submissions to NJG. These include a clearer definition of the journal's scope, a new section, policies addressing recent developments in IT, and further additions to our successful special collections series. Anticipating the effects of these measures, we are already pleased to see an increase in manuscript submissions. We are counting on you, our readers and authors, to help us make this cornerstone of Dutch geosciences flourish. It is not only a matter of contributing to science, but also of contributing to society. Addressing the pressing environmental, geopolitical and economic challenges we face relies on ever-growing knowledge of geological conditions, processes, resources and hazards, which we aim to help disseminate.

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AI statement

In the preparation of this manuscript, the use of AI was limited to linguistic aspects and did not contribute to the content, analysis or interpretation.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares none.

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