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EDITORIAL

The data note: a new vehicle

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Scientists often would like to access data used by other researchers, in order to test a model of their own, or perhaps to develop an alternative interpretation of a dataset. Several organisations, such as the Geological Society of America, have experimented with methods of making available material which is too voluminous to present in the form of a journal article. Several international data centres also have been established, whose aim is to facilitate research into trans-national phenomena. These include the Global Runoff Data Centre and the Global Precipitation Data Centre.

The concept of the data note was introduced by *Water Resources Research*, to place on record the existence and attributes of substantial datasets, and to provide details on how the datasets can be obtained – most likely via Internet. The concept seems to be a potentially useful one, and this issue of *Journal of Hydrology (NZ)* includes our first data note. We hope it will assist readers to quickly and easily evaluate the relevance and utility of the dataset to their own work, and if necessary to obtain access to it. We invite other scientists to consider providing the *Journal* with data notes which describe significant datasets.

Many of the research papers in this and earlier volumes of the *Journal* draw on large datasets (often obtained from other sources), which may have potential value for other scientists. Data collection is one of the most costly aspects of hydrological science, and the progress of science would no doubt be assisted if unnecessary barriers to access were identified and removed. We invite all our contributors to consider ways in which they can assist their colleagues to access their datasets, perhaps using Internet or CD-ROM.

The Congress of the World Meteorological Organisation, which is the agency in the UN system with responsibility for applied hydrology, recently adopted two resolutions on the exchange of meteorological and hydrological data and information products. Both express commitments to the principle of unhindered exchange of data, particularly for educational and research

purposes, and encourage charging regimes at no more than the direct cost of transfer. By definition, the WMO consists of its Member states, and since New Zealand is a Member, it follows that New Zealand hydrologists should endeavour to put life into this principle. We are all much more aware of the commercial value of intellectual property than used to be the case. Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that we can find ways to provide easy access to large datasets – particularly those assembled with PGSF resources – for "the greater good".