PREFACE

Papers of this issue of *Annals of Glaciology* present a unique temporal cross section of current research on problems related to changing ice conditions in three crucial areas of Earth's environmental regime: the two polar regions and the high-altitude plateaus and mountain ranges of Central Asia. Impacts of climate change on ice conditions within these three areas affect human economic conditions and well-being through the influence of ice on sea level, on the landscape factors leading to dangerous glacial lake floods, and on the hydrology of the great river systems of Asia. Because of this human dimension, this issue of *Annals of Glaciology* is the result of the contributions of authors from a wide variety of locations, institutions, disciplines and perspectives. We make particular note of the fact that the present issue, as with several issues in the past (notably Volumes 16 and 43, which also emphasized current research trends associated with ice in Central Asian plateaus and ranges), cuts across several of the most difficult language and culture barriers that have at times hindered universal progress in the dissemination of scientific discovery. The Scientific Editors, the Production Editors and, most importantly, the referees who undertook the review of the many papers submitted to this issue of the *Annals* are to be commended for their hard work in pushing aside the barriers to bring the essential elements of the science reported here to the forefront.

In these pages, readers will find continuity with the themes covered by *Annals of Glaciology*:

Vol. 16: Mountain glaciology relating to human activity

Vol. 21: The role of the cryosphere in global change

Vol. 24: Changing glaciers

Vol. 27: Antarctica and global change: interactions and impacts

Vol. 46: Cryospheric indicators of global climate change

Vol. 52(58): Snow, ice and humanity in a changing climate

Vol. 54(63): Glaciers and ice sheets in a warming climate

Progress in this area is exemplified by the degree to which the research reported within the present issue has become more detailed and complete. Relative to Vol. 16, for example, which contained 28 papers on subjects related to ice in Central Asia, the present issue of the *Annals* contains somewhat fewer papers on the same subjects, but they are longer, more detailed and have a perspective that is enhanced by the 21 years of research that have passed since the publication of Vol. 16 in 1992. Also notable in the present issue are several papers that cover research associated with ice conditions in the Nepalese Himalaya. We anticipate that these papers will serve as the foundation of papers representing additional progress on the subject of Nepalese ice conditions expected to emerge from the IGS's upcoming activity in Nepal (a symposium is planned for 2015).

We invite readers to find within the pages of this issue of the *Annals of Glaciology* a basic status report on current research within the realm of changing ice on planet Earth. The insights, interpretations and observations contained herein are the product of an energetic and careful scientific editing process, for which we express our greatest thanks to the generous work of the scientific editors and referees.

Doug MacAyeal
Weili Wang

https://doi.org/10.3189/S0260305500267979 Published online by Cambridge University Press