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Policy News – August 31, 2005

Skeptics get a journal

Climate skeptics and conservative politicians find all the science they need in the journal *Energy & Environment*.

If the manuscripts of climate-change skeptics are rejected by peer-reviewed science journals, they can always send their studies to *Energy & Environment*. "It's only we climate skeptics who have to look for little journals and little publishers like mine to even get published," explains Sonja Boehmer-Christiansen, the journal's editor.

According to a search of [WorldCat](#), a database of libraries, the journal is found in only 25 libraries worldwide. And the journal is not included in [Journal Citation Reports](#), which lists the impact factors for the top 6000 peer-reviewed journals.

The journal remains unknown to most scientists. "I really don't know what it is," says [Jay Famiglietti](#), editor-in-chief of [Geophysical Research Letters](#).

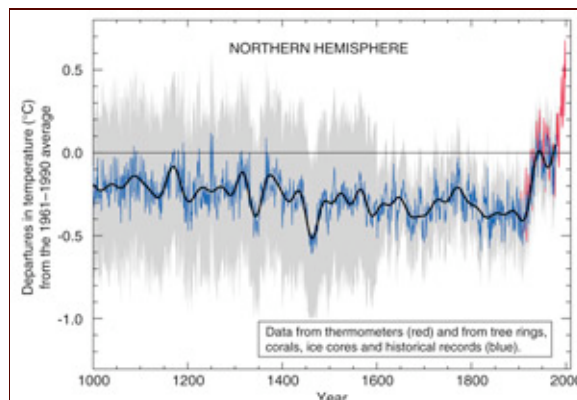
Boehmer-Christiansen "tries to give people who do not have a platform a platform," says [Hans von Storch](#), director of the Institute for Coastal Research at the GKSS Research Center (Germany). "This is then attractive for skeptic papers. They know they can come through and that interested people make sure the paper enters the political realm."

Because this obscure journal packs a powerful political impact, it is often used by researchers to expand on studies and then attack the science of global warming. For instance, when businessman [Stephen McIntyre](#) had a small technical paper accepted to *Geophysical Research Letters*, he followed it up with a more expansive statement in *Energy & Environment*.

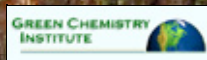
This repeated a pattern established by two other climate-change skeptics, Willie Soon and [Sallie Baliunas](#) of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. In 2003, the two published a paper in *Climate Research* that purported to find warmer temperatures 1000 years ago. Skeptics refer to this time as the Medieval Warming Period. The two then published a more expansive article making the same claims in

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Since the hockey-stick paper was first published, it has been a prime target for climate-change skeptics seeking to repudiate the science of global warming. [View larger image](#)



Energy & Environment.

The *Climate Research* paper drew sharp criticisms, including one from Michael Mann, the director of the Earth System Science Center at Pennsylvania State University. When von Storch, who was then the journal's editor, read Mann's critique, he recalls that he realized his journal should never have accepted the study. "If it would have been properly reviewed, it would have been rejected on the basis of methodological flaws," von Storch admits.

Significantly, Willie Soon no longer lists a citation for *Climate Research* in his [biography](#) at the nonprofit Marshall Institute, but he does reference the *Energy & Environment* study.

But while scientific claims made in *Energy & Environment* have little credibility among scientists, the Soon and Baliunas study eventually took on a life of its own. During Senate hearings in July 2003, Sen. George V. Voinovich (R-OH) [touted](#) the *Energy & Environment* paper as a refutation of the science on global warming. "Our paper shows this contradiction and argues that the results of Mann . . . are out of step with the preponderance of the evidence. The scientific evidence," he emphasized. "That is worth repeating: Mann's theory of global warming is out of step with most scientific thinking on the subject."

The study also worked its way into a U.S. EPA document. When the agency sent up a draft of its 2003 *Report on the Environment* to the White House, someone [slipped in text](#) referencing the Soon and Baliunas article in *Energy & Environment*. The effect was to undermine EPA conclusions that current increases in global temperatures are linked to human activities.

Officials at the EPA responded by simply deleting the whole section on climate change from the final report.

"I'm definitely a political scientist," says *Energy & Environment* editor [Boehmer-Christiansen](#). A reader in geography at the University of Hull (U.K.), Boehmer-Christiansen describes her doctoral work as covering international relations, but says she consults others before publishing any studies in her journal. "My science is A-level chemistry, physics, one year of geography at university, and a bit of math." She adds that her husband has a Ph.D. in physics.

She says that the more mainstream climatologists agree, the more suspicious she becomes about claims that human activity is causing global warming. Citing her upbringing in what was then East Germany, she states, "I was born in the Nazi era with one set of consensus, then brought up by the communists where there was also strong consensus. So just by nature, I'm very suspicious." —[PAUL D. THACKER](#)