



The Mail, The Mail, The Never-Ending Mail

The mail in whatever form is a relentless constant in the life of any journal editor. The U.S. mail delivers six days a week plus special deliveries on occasion. Other special delivery vans seem to be in and out of my driveway on a regular basis. And then there is e-mail (that I don't have) and fax mail (that I do have), not to mention phone mail, of course.

It seems as if every delivery evokes a variety of emotions. A day of heavy mail means satisfaction about the high level of activity of the journal and hence its success. This satisfaction is balanced by the depression of a large amount of work that needs to be attended to *now*—just when you thought you were all caught up and had some breathing space. A light mail day means the relief of a major burden for that day's activities, but concern about the flow of papers, reviews, revisions, etc.

The fascinating thing about mail is that you never know what it will bring. As W. H. Auden wrote in his poem "Night Mail":

Letters of thanks, letters from banks,
Letters of joy from girl or boy,
Receipted bills and invitations
To inspect new stock or to visit relations,
And applications for situations,
And timid lovers' declarations,
And gossip, gossip from all the nations.

Not that all those categories apply to the journal mail that I receive. I assure you that I have received no "lovers' declarations," timid or otherwise. I do receive a great deal of "news, news from all the nations," to paraphrase the last line.

Again, opening the mail produces mixed emotions. Positive support in so many letters is a pleasure to receive and spurs us on to greater efforts. A few examples include:

"I made all of the changes proposed by reviewer #2. If possible, please convey my thanks for the good suggestions.... I find OE interesting and useful. Thank you for your efforts."

"It has been a pleasant experience to deal with your Journal as we always received prompt replies to all our letters and then finally a copy of the Journal containing our research paper. Our sincere thanks for the same."

"We wish to express our appreciation to you and the reviewers for the prompt handling of this manuscript."

The success of the journal depends on a lot of people who give time, talent, and effort to the process of review and publication, so it was nice to hear from one correspondent, "It is always a pleasure to hear from you even though it means work."

Of course not all the mail is favorable to authors, reviewers, or editors. Happily, real difficulties occur only on rare occasions...but they do create great concern in our office. Maybe on another occasion I can deal with some of these issues that have arisen.

Editor's Anecdote

In a couple of editorials, I have mentioned that I get addressed in a number of ways. Recently I visited the University of Central Florida and was given the name tag that is reproduced below.

Brian J. Thompson
Editor

