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Editorials and Commentary

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I have probably always been better suited as a sprinter than a distance runner. When I ran track in high school, for example, I competed in the 100 m and 200 m events, nothing that involved more than once around the track. During training runs, I usually had difficulty maintaining focus after a mile or two, and had to force myself to continue. Speed was my forte, not stamina.

Perhaps the same is true with my editorial writing. When I started my tenure as the Editor-in-Chief, I was initially unsure what I could possibly write in an editorial that the readership of *Optical Engineering* might find interesting and useful. After some reflection, however, I managed to identify a number of topics that seemed to be very relevant, and I proceeded over several months to communicate my perspectives on several issues. This included important journal issues such as reviewers, literature review, and plagiarism, along with more personal thoughts on mentorship and the International Year of Light. I received comments from colleagues on a few of my editorials, so I know that at least a handful of *Optical Engineering* subscribers actually read them. Having exhausted all of my good initial ideas for editorial topics, however, I realized that I was perhaps running a marathon at a sprinter's pace and it was unsustainable. So I decided to write quarterly as opposed to monthly editorials.

Editorials are often written as monologues, limited to the perspective of one individual and lacking the opportunity for

the readers of *Optical Engineering* to express their own perspectives on topics of interest to the field. The journal previously included a section called Communications that perhaps offered a venue for commentary and feedback, but we simply have not received any submissions to this section for years. The OE staff and I believe that this could be due, in part, to a lack of familiarity with the section and a lack of understanding of what constitutes a Communications paper. I must admit that I could not recall ever reading such a paper in the journal.

I believe that this opportunity for dialogue is good for the journal, and would like to encourage it. For this reason, I am initiating a new section called Commentary for which readers of *Optical Engineering* can make submissions. The official description for a commentary paper is a brief technical communication presenting a scientific analysis or assessment of a topic of general interest to the readers of *Optical Engineering*, including comments on recent papers. As opposed to regular manuscripts that are reviewed against the normal standards of originality and significance, commentary papers will be assessed based on the perceived level of interest and the soundness of the scientific analysis or logic supporting the author's position on a topic. After selecting submissions that appear to be of reader interest, I plan to use a peer-review process to scrub the submissions for soundness. My expectation is that commentary papers go beyond opinion pieces and provide some level of scientific backing for stated positions.

If you share my appreciation for scientific dialogue, I encourage you to consider submitting a commentary paper on an issue that you feel is important for the optical engineering community. My hope is that these papers will complement my editorials in providing more diverse perspectives on topics of interest to the *Optical Engineering* readership. Returning back to the running analogy, I eventually became a reasonable distance runner several years ago when I began training regularly for the Air Force Marathon with a few of my close colleagues. Perhaps your contributions to the Commentary section will help me find the same stamina with my editorials.

Michael T. Eismann
Editor-in-Chief