



The Conference I Missed

I had fully intended to participate in a very interesting conference held at Vanderbilt University, March 4–7, 1992. The title of this meeting was “Philosophical, Ethical, and Practical Aspects of Editing Refereed Science Journals—A Workshop for Editors of Refereed Scientific Journals.” The workshop cochairmen were R. A. Weeks and D. L. Kinser of the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at Vanderbilt University. Dr. Weeks is the editor of the *Journal of Non-Crystalline Solids* and Dr. Kinser is coeditor.

The organizers had contacted me some time ago (along with other editors) to get our reaction to such a conference. I told them I thought it was a good idea and that I would be pleased to participate and prepare a contributed paper entitled “Editing in the applied sciences.”

But as the much quoted Robert Burns said “The best laid schemes o’ mice an’ men gang aft a-gley.” For reasons beyond my control (I was ill), I did not make the meeting, but sent my paper anyway. My modest contribution will appear in the proceedings to be published later this year. The words of Burns again come to mind:

But human bodies are sic fools,
For a’ their colleges and schools,
That when nae real ills perplex them,
They make enow themselves to vex them.

I am not sure that there are any “real ills” to perplex us in the editorial process, but I do believe that we may “make enow” ourselves to vex us. Issues exist that editors do have to be concerned about, and a conference of this kind is a good forum for discussing them. It is worth quoting here some of the philosophy behind the meeting as set out in the brochure describing the meeting:

The workshop will consist of invited talks, contributed papers, and discussions. These will articulate the justifications for refereed science journals, ethical principles of editors and publishers, and practical aspects of refereeing, of editing, and of publishing such journals. Conventional wisdom is that refereed science journals are the *sine quo non* of reputable research suitable for dissemination to the general public.

The reports of research published in these journals are, in this conventional wisdom, reports of the best research. This workshop will consider whether this wisdom has a basis in fact and how the actions of editors ensure that such is the case.

Recent stories in newspapers and such journals as *Science*, hearings by congressional committees, and actions by federal agencies to establish procedures by which allegations of author malfeasance may be determined are evidence that there are problems with the functioning of referees and editors. There are no established procedures for most journals by which a paper containing false data can be retracted. There are few reliable methods for determining if a paper has had multiple publications. The criteria for multiple publications are ambiguous. Editorial biases are rarely discussed. The power of an editor to select referees who will reject a paper is under no control, nor are there generally accepted guidelines. The failures of the system of refereeing have been discussed in books and in some conferences. Few suggestions for improving the system have been made. Responsibilities and ethics of editors have rarely been publicly discussed. This conference will consider these and many other problems that beset editors of refereed science journals from the United States, Europe, USSR, Japan, and many other countries.

Again, I am sorry that I missed direct participation in this workshop, but I certainly look forward to reading the words of my fellow editors from such journals as *Science*, *Journal of the American Chemical Society*, *Philosophical Magazine*, *Human Pathology*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *Proceedings of the IEEE*, and the *Journal of Physics and Chemistry of Glasses* (USSR).

I will certainly let you know when the volume is published.

Brian J. Thompson
Editor

June 1992

Adaptive Signal Processing

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August 1992

Optical Engineering and U.K. Industry

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September 1992

Wavelet Transform

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October 1992

Acousto-Optics

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November 1992

Relay Mirror Experiment

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December 1992

Automatic Target Recognition

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January 1993

Optical Research in Asia

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February 1993

Biomedical Optics

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Manuscripts due June 15, 1992.

March 1993

Optical Fiber Reliability II

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Manuscripts due July 15, 1992.

April 1993

Emerging Optoelectronic Technologies

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Manuscripts due Sep. 1, 1992

May 1993

Phase Contrast Microscopy

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This special issue is connected with an international conference on Phase Contrast (PhC) and Differential Interference Contrast Microscopy, scheduled Oct. 19-21, 1992, in Warsaw, Poland, and organized by the Polish Chapter of SPIE. Topics will include theory and practice of phase micro-objects visualization, instrumentation for PhC microscopy, quantitative PhC techniques, linear phase microscopy, laser scanning differential PhC microscopy, scanning tunneling microscopy of phase objects, and new applications in biology/biomedicine and materials sciences. Manuscripts due Oct. 1, 1992.

June 1993

From Numerical to Symbolic Image Processing: Systems & Applications

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This special issue will present innovative research and results on the integration between numerical and symbolic processing. Examples covering real applications will be considered. Manuscripts due Oct. 15, 1992.

July 1993

Visual Communication and Image Processing IV

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Papers in this special issue will include, but are not limited to, the following topics: visual communication services, systems, and standards; image compression algorithms for binary, still, and motion pictures; advanced and high-definition TV; video networking; model-based image coding; image segmentation and understanding; pattern recognition; human visual models for image processing; image processing for medical applications; and imaging technology. Manuscripts due Dec. 1, 1992.

September 1993

Optical Science and Engineering in Canada

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Manuscripts due Feb. 1, 1993.

October 1993

Microolithography

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This issue will cover the range of topics found in the SPIE Symposium on Microlithography (San Jose, Calif.), including resist materials, optical systems, and metrology. Manuscripts due March 1, 1993.

November 1993

Acquisition, Tracking, and Pointing

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Manuscripts due April 1, 1993.