



Editorial Responsibilities

I was pleased to participate in an evening panel discussion during SPIE's annual meeting in San Diego with several of my colleagues who are editors of other journals in our field. We engaged in a very interesting dialogue with an active audience. Many important and often difficult questions were posed—and some of them even answered! The time spent was well worthwhile and, although it might be self-serving to say it, I think that the editors acquitted themselves well in explaining the policies, procedures, and philosophies of the journals that they represented. It was interesting to note that one person in the audience had to be reminded (by me) that *Optical Engineering* was not “my journal” but “his journal.”

It is not my intent to report on that panel discussion, as interesting as that might be. I just wanted to make a few observations about *Optical Engineering* and the role and responsibility of the editor as I see it. The editor's role is not merely to perform a set of predetermined mechanical tasks, although there is a good deal of that to be done just to make deadlines and produce the journal on schedule. We are fortunate that the scope of *Optical Engineering* is quite broad and its aim is to bring to its readers a variety of papers in diverse branches of the field. The juxtaposition of papers in different subdisciplines is very important and allows for the transfer of ideas. There is, of course, also a role for journals of a more focused and specialized content, and we meet some of that need too with our special issues or special sections with important input from the guest editors.

The tone and quality of *Optical Engineering* is set by the papers already published and the perceived value of these papers to the readers. *Optical Engineering* is but an example of various methods of information transfer—information that can generally be counted on as being correct because of the review process (not always so, of course, but the reader is certainly able to read the papers critically).

The first proactive step of the editor is to determine if a submitted paper is appropriate for the journal. So far I have not received a paper that is so obviously not optics that I have returned it to the author. Thus, I have sent every paper received out to reviewers; as a result of the review process I

have transferred a few papers to more suitable journals, but not before consulting with the editor of the other journal and the authors.

The editor's choice of reviewers is clearly very important. It is not a matter of selecting randomly a set of names from a predetermined list—judgment is certainly involved—knowing the people and their expertise is vital.

Reading the reviews and assisting the authors in their responses to the reviews is another important role for the editor. After all, the editor is the liaison between the reviewers and the authors. I must say that I believe it is my role to be supportive of the authors and to help them get their papers published. This process sometimes takes several iterations with authors, reviewers, and myself. The table below gives the statistics to date of all the submitted papers I have handled that have gone through the review and revision process.

Accepted for publication	67%
Not accepted for publication	28%
Closed	2.4%
Withdrawn	1.6%
Transferred for publication in another journal	1.0%

Thus 68% of the papers will be published. Those files that I reluctantly had to close because of the authors' nonresponse may well reappear, and those few that are withdrawn may be resubmitted.

I would be the first to admit that mistakes are made—we do not always get it right. I know of at least one paper that I could not accept, but was accepted and published in another prestigious journal. I also know of at least one paper where the reverse occurred. That's good, the information was published.

As your editor I am happy with the statistics listed above. Together with the editorial staff in Bellingham I am pleased to “edit” your journal *Optical Engineering*, and hope that as a team we are responsible for “value added.”

Brian J. Thompson
Editor

December 1992

Automatic Target Recognition

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January 1993

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April 1993

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May 1993

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June 1993

From Numerical to Symbolic Image Processing: Systems & Applications

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Manuscripts due Dec. 1, 1992.

August 1993

Electro-Optical Flight Systems

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Manuscripts due Jan. 1, 1993.

September 1993

Optical Science and Engineering in Canada

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Manuscripts due Feb. 1, 1993.

October 1993

Microolithography

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Manuscripts due March 1, 1993.

November 1993

Acquisition, Tracking, and Pointing

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Manuscripts due April 1, 1993.

December 1993

Magnetospheric Imagery and Atmospheric Remote Sensing

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January 1994

Infrared Technology

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Manuscripts due June 1, 1993.

February 1994

Optical Interconnects and Packaging

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Manuscripts due July 1, 1993.

March 1994

High Heat Flux Optical Engineering

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Manuscripts due Aug. 1, 1993.

April 1994

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Manuscripts due Sep. 1, 1993.

June 1994

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