Editorial

Jack D. Gaskill, Editor

"What Happened to My Paper?"

The question I am asked most frequently by authors who have submitted manuscripts to *Optical Engineering* is—"What happened to my paper?" I won't bore you with a list of the stock answers I have for these authors, but they all tend to be variations on the theme that "things are taking a bit longer than anticipated." Such a response doesn't satisfy very many of my questioners and, as you might expect, often elicits a response of its own—usually unprintable. Consequently, I decided to find out what really does happen to their papers and to share my findings with you.

My study included the 80 contributed papers that were printed in the 12 issues of *Optical Engineering* from July 1986 through June 1987; it did not include any papers that were specifically designated as part of a special issue because those papers were processed differently than the standard contributed papers. I broke the entire publication process up into three parts: the review phase, the revision phase, and the production phase. The review phase was the period from the time I first received the manuscript until I returned it to the author for revision. The revision phase started at the end of the review phase and lasted until I received the revised manuscript. Finally, the production phase spanned the time from the end of the revision phase until the first day of the month in which the paper was actually published.

The table below lists the minimum, mean, and maximum number of days for each of the three phases, as well as for the entire publication process. The standard deviation is also shown for completeness.

	Min # of days	Mean # of days	Max # of days	Std. Dev.
Review phase	122	210	391	68
Revision phase	8	84	482	84
Production phase	45	93	182	24
Entire process	214	387	833	105

I had previously known that the review phase generally seemed to take a long time, but I was surprised to learn that the mean of this phase was so large—7 months. I was also surprised to learn that the revision phase took an average of nearly 3 months, that the standard deviation of the revision phase was equal to its mean, and that the maximum time for the revision phase was 3 months longer than for the review phase.

The results of this study indicate to me that, during the period covered, it took too long to get a paper published in *Optical Engineering*. I'm not certain if we are doing better now, but I intend to find out in the near future. I will also see if I can find some ways to streamline the process to help reduce the overall publication time. Authors can also help to speed things up by making certain that their manuscripts conform to the requirements of the journal and by promptly revising and returning their manuscripts and galley proofs. Finally, referees can do their part to shorten the publication time either by carrying out their review in a timely fashion or by notifying us immediately that they will not be able to do the review so that we may promptly solicit another referee. I might point out that, for the 80 papers included in this study, the average number of referees that we were required to solicit to get the two required reviews was 2.65 per paper, and the maximum number solicited for any single paper was 6.

Future Special Issue
Call for Papers

February 1989

Polarization Considerations for Optical Systems

Guest Editor

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The February 1989 special issue of *Optical Engineering* will be devoted to polarization considerations for optical systems. Recent optical system concepts in optical computing, optical data storage, laser radar, and many other applications rely on polarized light for their operation. These systems have necessitated the development of new methods for the design, analysis, and testing of polarization-critical systems. This special issue will cover the polarization analysis of optical systems, polarization properties of optical elements, sources and detectors, and polarization-based optical system concepts.

Special emphasis will be placed on methods for optical design with polarized light, including polarization ray tracing, polarization aberration theory, and other methods to simulate the effects of crystals, thin films, optical fibers, and other polarizing elements on the propagation of polarized light through optical systems. Topics of interest include polarization modulators, ultralow polarization lenses, and polarizing beam splitters. Polarizing optical system concepts of interest include laser radar, optical signal processors and computers, optical data storage, fiber optic sensors, ellipsometers, and spectropolarimeters.

Authors are encouraged to submit manuscripts on any of the above topics for inclusion in the special issue. Manuscripts for consideration should be sent to the Guest Editor before Aug. 15, 1988.

(See p. 511 for complete Editorial Schedule.)