Manuscripts Often Have to Be Revised

My relatively short experience as an editor of a journal has already taught me a great deal about authors and reviewers. That is, I have relearned a great deal about human nature, and you might be surprised to read that much of it is very positive. Most reviewers take their role seriously, going through the paper with great care, trying to take the author's point of view and seeing how the manuscript can be improved. Their criticism is generally constructive even when they are pointing out serious errors or shortcomings in the manuscript. The author's reaction to these reviewers' comments is, more often than not, positive and, on many occasions, the author will genuinely thank the reviewers for their diligence and for helping to improve the manuscript. I am sure that authors often feel angry or hurt initially by the reviewers' comments, but then realize that it is a confidential process and that the reviewers are authors themselves.

The result of the review process very often means that a manuscript has to be revised. These revisions can range from a minor change to a major task. In some cases, the manuscript really has to be rewritten. One of the roles of the editor is to make judgments about the revisions and whether they meet the reviewers' comments. There are times when the revised paper needs to go back to the reviewer for a final opinion. For major revisions and rewrites, a rereview of the paper may be required either by the original reviewers or by a new independent reviewer. In the final analysis, the editor has to make the decision and live with the consequences of that decision, whether it is positive or negative. Either way, sometimes the editor satisfies neither the author nor the reviewers!

Inevitably, the process of revision delays the publication process, but it is in the author's best interest to get the paper back to the editor as soon as possible. So what

is my experience since December 1, 1990? I would have to say, quite positive. The average time is 6.5 weeks from the date I send the manuscript back to the author with the reviewers' comments to the date that I receive the revised manuscript. The median time is 6 weeks, and the range is from 1 week to 19 weeks. However, I do have two manuscripts that have not yet been returned after 30 weeks. (This information is as of the date of this writing—September 11, 1991.) All of the other manuscripts still out for revision have the chance of falling within the distribution discussed above.

All this raises at least one interesting question. For how long is the review valid? There comes a point in time when the editor has to advise the author that the revised manuscript is still welcome, even expected, but given the time interval, it will have to be considered as a new submission and sent out for review again. Another pleasant task for the editor!

The reader will notice that I have used the term *reviewer* throughout rather than *referee*. A matter of taste perhaps. The dictionary informs me that the use of the word *referee* is certainly appropriate since it means "a person who reviews an esp. technical paper before publication" (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*); so *reviewer* seems at least equally appropriate.

We owe a sincere thanks to our reviewers for their work on the journal. Happily, none of them follows H. Pearson's point of view in *The Smith of Smiths*, published in 1934, in which he writes "I never read a book before reviewing it; it prejudices a man so."

Brian J. Thompson
Editor

January 1992

Smart Materials and Structures

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March 1992

Optics in Poland

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April 1992

Optical Methods and Means of Information Processing

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May 1992

Optical Implementation of Information Processing, Pattern Recognition, and Neural Networks

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June 1992

Adaptive Signal Processing

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July 1992

Biomedical Optics

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Manuscripts due Dec. 15, 1991.

August 1992

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Manuscripts due Jan. 1, 1992.

September 1992

Wavelet Transform

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Manuscripts due March 23, 1992.

October 1992

Acousto-Optics

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*This special issue will focus on all aspects of
research on acousto-optic effects and devices as well
as their signal and image processing applications.
Manuscripts due Feb. 1, 1992.*

November 1992

Relay Mirror Experiment

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*This special issue will cover the Relay Mirror
Experiment and associated experiments. Topics will
include the development, deployment, operation, and
performance of the space-based Relay Mirror and its
associated ground-based equipment. Manuscripts
due April 1, 1992.*

December 1992

Automatic Target Recognition

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*The areas to be considered for inclusion are sonar,
radar, laser and passive IR, visible ATR techniques,
modeling of sensors, target segmentation, detection
and tracking, model-based target recognition,
multisensor processing and sensor fusion for ATR,
role of performance evaluation in ATR, invariant
object recognition, neural networks for ATR, adap-
tive and learning systems for ATR, and optical pro-
cessing for ATR. Manuscripts due April 1, 1992.*

January 1993

Optical Research in Asia

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*This special issue will present innovative re-
search and development results from Asian coun-
tries. Every field of photonics will be considered.
Prospective authors are invited to submit manu-
scripts for consideration. Manuscripts due Feb. 1,
1992.*

March 1993

Optical Fiber Reliability II

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Manuscripts due July 15, 1992.

May 1993

Phase Contrast Microscopy

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Manuscripts due Oct. 1, 1992.

July 1993

Visual Communication and Image Processing IV

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Manuscripts due Dec. 1, 1992.

September 1993

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