Special Issues, Special Sections, and Related Topics

Optical Engineering has made a point of providing its readers with a feature that gathers together a number of papers that are closely related on a timely topic of importance in optical engineering. As you know, these groupings of papers do not just happen—they are planned and scheduled. One of my responsibilities as Editor is to choose suitable topics and select a Guest Editor for each. Not incidentally, I am always interested in suggestions for both topics and Guest Editors.

Currently, the journal contains about 25 papers a month. If all the papers in a particular issue are devoted to that topic, then the issue is truly a special issue of the journal even though it is one of the regular monthly issues. This does not happen very often (in fact, it has not happened yet during my tenure). Usually the papers on the selected topic are grouped together in a “special section” at the front of that particular issue. Whether it is a special issue or a special section, it is preceded by an editorial prepared by the Guest Editor.

Once a special section is arranged and a Guest Editor chosen, we announce the topic in the editorial schedule, which appears immediately following my editorial in each issue. The Guest Editor will actively procure papers as well as receive those that are submitted in response to the information in the editorial schedule. The Guest Editor’s task is to obtain a well-rounded set of papers that represents the state of the art of that topic. Often a special will be stimulated by one of the conferences run by SPIE—The International Society for Optical Engineering. However, it is not sufficient to include only papers from a conference, and those papers that are selected must meet the guidelines set forth for the publication of proceedings papers.¹

The Guest Editor is responsible for receiving the submitted manuscripts, logging in the date received, and having the papers reviewed by at least two experts in the field. The Guest Editor returns papers to their authors if revisions are required by the reviewers. As the penultimate step, the Guest Editor checks that the manuscripts follow the guidelines set out in the “Information for Contributors” that appears at the

end of each issue of *Optical Engineering*. To assist in this task, we provide the Guest Editor with a checklist, which includes such items as format, quality of illustrations, keywords, format of references, figure and table captions, authors’ biographies and photographs, and publication charges. The final step for the Guest Editor is to mail the original manuscript with the checklist to me for formal acceptance. After a final check on the manuscript, I forward it to the managing editor’s office in Bellingham, where the journals staff does the production work to turn out the issue.

So how well does this process work? Since I became Editor starting with the January 1991 issue, we have published some 13 special sections in the journal. These special sections have contained a total of 173 papers for an average section size of 13.3 papers. Of the 173 papers, 40 have been published in a different form in SPIE’s unrefereed proceedings.

We look forward to bringing you future special issues and special sections and maybe one day even a “special supplement” to the journal. However, these can only happen with the dedicated efforts of our Guest Editors. I owe them a special thanks for what they do to help me, and I also pass on a thank you to them from all our readers. Thank you, Guest Editors.

Brian J. Thompson
Editor

¹B. J. Thompson, “Editorial,” *Opt. Eng.* **31**(6), 1141 (1992).

October 1992

Acousto-Optics

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December 1992

Automatic Target Recognition

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January 1993

Optical Research in Asia

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March 1993

Optical Fiber Reliability II

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April 1993

Emerging Optoelectronic Technologies

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May 1993

Phase Contrast Microscopy

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Manuscripts due Oct. 1, 1992.

June 1993

From Numerical to Symbolic Image Processing: Systems & Applications

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July 1993

Visual Communication and Image Processing IV

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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

Microlithography

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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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Manuscripts due May 1, 1993.

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

Micro-Optics

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Manuscripts due Sep. 1, 1993.

June 1994

Optical Science & Engineering in India

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