

Editorial

AS many of our faithful readers and contributors already know, throughout the year the Editor and Associate Editors of *AIAA Journal* receive countless missives and barbs from both authors and reviewers relating to our competency and judgment. Of course, whenever possible, we try to justify our decisions in substance, but there are a few general concepts and ideas which we think we should pass along to prospective authors which, if adhered to, would save many hours of unnecessary correspondence.

Technical Notes—In the past, Technical Notes in this journal were essentially short papers, and were subject to the same review procedures as longer papers. This resulted in the normal time lapse between receipt and publication, and rarely allowed to the rapid publication of new and interesting results. To encourage rapid publication (equivalent to letters to the editor in some journals), the Publications Committee changed the policy of reviewing these Technical Notes to forego the formal review procedure, and substitute for it a review by the Associate Editor in the field of his competence, and if necessary, a brief review by another expert. Through this new procedure, we have in fact succeeded in reducing the time from submission to publication of a Technical Note. For example, in the November 1967 issue, the average length of time to publication was less than six months.

On the other hand, the change in review procedure does not imply a change in the standards of quality but only increased emphasis on new and important results, even of a preliminary nature. To emphasize the new role for Technical Notes, I have discouraged the previous practice of suggesting to authors of full-length papers that received marginal reviews that the paper be reduced to a Technical Note. Obviously, such a procedure only lengthens the time to publication even beyond that for a full-length paper. Unfortunately, some authors have misunderstood our policy and have been disappointed when we have rejected either pedestrian analyses or submissions of work just for the "record." To repeat: the standards for quality of Technical Notes have not been lowered.

Precedents—*AIAA Journal* is devoted to publishing research results of interest to the general field of transportation through or on fluids.* Now there are many fields of engineering and applied science which overlap this definition to some extent; and, of course, there are just as many other journals. We try to decide whether each paper has a specific application to our definition; if not, we prefer to refer the paper to a more appropriate journal. Being human, we naturally err from time to time, preferably in favor of the author; and this results in publishing a paper or group of papers which, perhaps, are either of only marginal interest to our readership, or which are more appropriate to another journal. In the same way that we review papers, our product is reviewed by our readership, past editors,

AIAA Technical Committees, etc., and these mistakes are brought to our attention.

Now occasionally a paper will be submitted concerning a subject on which we have had publications in the past, but which is plainly no longer appropriate to *AIAA Journal*, with the author claiming that we must consider his paper on the basis of *precedent*. Our answer to this is that precedent is not a consideration, for a simple reason: we cannot afford to live with our (collective) errors in judgment for the remainder of the existence of this journal. If we did, we would publish so many papers on irrelevant topics that there would be either no room for the relevant, or the size and cost would spiral. No publication, unless it has unlimited financial resources and readership patience, can afford to be saddled with its own precedents. And neither can we.

Prior Publication—We often must face the question as to whether a paper has been published previously. This arises mainly in the case of preprints or proceedings of non-AIAA meetings, NASA reports, and certain contractor reports. We have therefore tentatively accepted the following definition: if a paper appeared in a publication that has been registered with the Library of Congress and is also readily available for purchase by libraries, or is available for purchase from the U.S. Government Printing Office, then that paper is considered to be a terminal publication and cannot be considered for publication by *AIAA Journal*. By the same token, we cannot be held responsible for the contents of nonterminal, non-AIAA publications or references to such publications, simply because they are of such limited availability to our editors, staff, and reviewers. To put it simply, if your paper is available only in a non-AIAA, nonterminal publication, and was overlooked by a subsequent author, editor, or reviewer, we cannot accept responsibility for this error.

Question of Claims—Some papers, particularly theoretical ones, are concerned with the development of an analysis of a complex problem. The question that then arises is whether the method works. To answer this, the author sometimes applies his technique to a simpler problem, which does not necessarily evoke the special properties of the analysis, and which has been solved previously by perhaps a simpler method. The author then claims that the agreement of the two results constitutes proof of the validity of his technique to the more complex problem. In general, the editors disagree with that position. To demonstrate that a method is suitable for certain classes of problems, it must be applied to one of that class. In the same vein, the title and abstract should claim no more than the actual results achieved.

Referencing—We often receive a paper in which Ref. 1 is to some well-known classical author (Bernoulli, Newton, etc.) and the remainder of the references are to the author's previous publications and unpublished reports. This raises some questions. First, has the author, in his references, mentioned or used the results of another

* In this context, space is also a fluid.

author, but in his paper has he deliberately avoided referencing the other author by referencing himself? Second, does the lack of references to other authors indicate that no one else has contributed to this problem? If the subject is topical, the latter explanation strains our credulousness. Perhaps the subject is so rococo that no one other than the author is interested in pursuing it, and he is merely embellishing his own embellishments. In general, such self-referencing is a very questionable practice, which we generally try to discourage. Unfortunately, we do not have in our employ an oracle, and so we must rely on the integrity of the authors themselves to enforce a policy of equitable referencing.

Very often a reference to another author is to a report or preprint *which was subsequently published*. This practice should be avoided also, since it makes it very difficult to work backward through the literature.

Finally, when a particular technique is used by an author to solve a problem, it is usually easier for the author to reference a recent paper in which the same technique was used to solve a different problem, instead of the original paper in which the technique or basic law was first elucidated. This also serves to confuse the literature, since the original author and his original contribution and insight are soon lost

in our information explosion. Such may be the price of progress, but to us it appears very costly indeed.

Appreciation and Gratitude—We wish to express our appreciation and gratitude to our retiring Associate Editors: Walter Ashley, Raymond Friedman, and Winston Markey and acknowledge their enormous efforts in keeping pace with the deluge of papers as the Journal has grown. And we wish to introduce and welcome our new Associate Editors, Richard Battin, George Markstein, and M. J. Turner. We also wish to thank with deepest gratitude the reviewers listed below who have carried the main burden of reading and recommending papers for publication, and deserve the major credit for our maintaining our standards of quality. The credit for achieving order in our sea of chaos in the publishing world belongs to our office staff headed by Miss Ruth Bryans and Miss Susan Gritz, and to my secretary Miss Irene Barbanti for handling my correspondence. Last but not least, I wish to express my warmest appreciation to five people whose devoted patience and fortitude has made possible my personal participation in this important undertaking: my wife Evelyn and my four sons.

George W. Sutton
Editor-in-Chief

Reviewers for *AIAA Journal*, January 1–October 1, 1967*

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* Because it is difficult to include the reviewers for October, November and December in this issue of the Journal, they will be listed with the reviewers for 1968 in the January 1969 issue.

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Special Issues on MHD Power Generation

In the fall of 1968 a special joint issue of the *AIAA Journal* and of the *Proceedings of the IEEE* will be devoted to the subject of magnetohydrodynamics (MHD) electrical power generation.

It is planned to publish the papers jointly in both Journals. The *Proceedings of the IEEE* will publish all papers accepted for this special issue while the *AIAA Journal* will publish as many as possible, subject to available space. Fields to be covered include generator theory and experiments, open and closed cycle systems, liquid metal generators, and plasma property studies. Those working currently in these fields are asked to consider submitting papers for these special issues of the Journals. Send four copies of the complete manuscript by April 1, 1968 to the Managing Editor, Scientific Publications, AIAA, 1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10019.

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