

Report

WHO could have forecast that, in a year of inflation which reached runaway proportions, our journal membership subscription rates would be reduced by one-half? The event was triggered when Holt Ashley launched his campaign to rebuild the AIAA membership. The ideas and actions following his lead have not been limited to a routine recruiting drive. Instead they encompass a genuine and thorough analysis of all facets of the Institute which might be reformed to meet the challenges of these changing times and provide better services for our members. The most exciting idea to us in publications was the journal subscription reduction. It was first discussed by the Publications Committee on March 21 at Williamsburg. The Committee recommended appropriate staff studies and implementation of reduced member rates if possible. The staff did so, with support from the other sections of the Institute management, and the new rates were set in time for announcements with the annual dues billing and in time for Gordon Dugger's August A/A editorial. The decreases in revenue will be offset by other reallocations and, hopefully, by increased subscriptions from the present membership and the new members this action may help foster. It most certainly will allow the professional technologist to have easier access to this important archival literature.

Another less startling activity was a direct mail invitation to nonmember authors and reviewers to join AIAA. The response from the mailing has been encouraging, and the campaign will continue.

The Publications Committee has commissioned a subcommittee chaired by Joseph A. Schetz to review and recommend changes to the scopes of our journals and to evaluate the question of whether a new journal or other publication outlet may be needed. Special emphasis will be placed upon defining objectives in publication of technical literature which impacts fields that are now and/or will be applying aerospace technology. The aerospace field encompasses many disciplines; it is the spacecraft and rocket applications of these many disciplines that are reported in this journal. Our present informal policy is to publish papers where related applications are being made to other fields, e.g., transportation, energy, and biomedicine. However, there are many shades of gray which must be better defined, because taken to the extreme our scope becomes unbounded.

Perhaps the next step in solving our scope problem lies within the yet undefined structure of the federation of technical societies which is now being discussed in the highest levels of this nation's leading technical societies and the National Academy of Engineering. Archival literature became better structured when the AIAA and IEEE were formed from their parent societies, and, although no such singular incorporation is contemplated in the federation, the federation could help to bring about a realignment of associated discipline-oriented and field-oriented journals. Selective Dissemination of Documents could become a viable alternative when federation is achieved. Meanwhile the JSR staff will endeavor to provide an archive for related applications of aerospace technology in other fields.

Further review of the acceptability of Synoptics has been made. In 1972, 39 Synoptics were published in JSR. However, another 19 Synoptics were requested from authors who have so far failed to respond. One must question whether Synoptics are worth pushing if approximately 33% of the papers in that category are withdrawn by the authors. We are sensitive to criticism which

authors reported during the early Synoptic discussions. However, in reviewing the correspondence file in each of the above-mentioned 19 cases, no author claimed dislike of the concept as a reason for not responding. Rather, many promised to respond but just did not get around to it, so we have set their files aside. Also, it was noted that many of these 19 papers required major revisions; authors often fail to respond to major revision requests. We found no evidence of any negative reaction in these correspondence files. However, we remain open to pro or con data and reactions which you may wish to convey to us.

Our policy of not formally reviewing Engineering Notes was again reviewed as requested directly and indirectly by some of our readers. Since Notes may be interim, partial, and/or technical data of time limited interest, these are normally reviewed only by an editor when submitted as such. Of course, some full-length papers are reduced to Notes after formal review, but for those in the former category this shortened review process has its pitfall. Lacking the review of an expert in the specific field, a few unworthy Notes slip into the journals. One reader in objecting to this practice expounded that it took good money to publish a poor Note and that an expert reviewer could have saved the money. It is not obvious that putting Notes through formal review would save money, because the formal review handling costs are considerable. I believe that formal review of all Notes would incrementally cost more for administration than that saved by the few rejections which would ensue. On balance, the Publications Committee decided to retain the policy and accept the fact that a few poor ones will get published.

We now turn to the reviewer who is the jurist of our system. We try not to overburden him with too many papers, but no matter how light the task, it is a burden. His only compensation is the satisfaction of a contribution to his field and a yearly public thank-you note in our editorial. This year we note a suggestion on how to ease the burden. In the November A/A, page 4, Professor Mark Morkovin's letter on "A Harangue to Young Authors by a Weary Reviewer" scores a point for the reviewer. His thesis is that too many authors claim results and conclusions far beyond those warranted by the meager data and analysis reported. Restraint is recommended, and it is recommended that you read the "Harangue"; heeding it will ease the reviewer's burden.

To those other weary reviewers we extend our warm thanks for furnishing that priceless commodity of time and talent that allows the system to work. On behalf of Ruth Bryans, Anne Huth, their wonderful staff, and Eleanor Johnson, I extend their thanks to you as I extend mine to them for being such a great team to which it is a pleasure to belong.

I am pleased to announce that Professor Leonard Meirovitch and Dr. Kenn Clark will continue into a second term of service as Associate Editors. Their thorough, competent, and prompt handling of peak loads is a vital link in our journal cycle. Unfortunately, Dr. Bernard Paiewonsky has found it necessary to resign because of illness in his family. We will miss his storehouse of experience and talent which has been of great service to AIAA publications over the years. We welcome Professor William F. Powers, of the University of Michigan, who will replace Dr. Paiewonsky.

Ralph R. Ragan
Editor-in-Chief