

AICHE JOURNAL

JULY, 1971 • VOL. 17, NO. 4

The AIChE Journal, an official publication of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, is devoted in the main to theoretical developments and research in chemical engineering and allied branches of engineering and science.

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Publication Office, 215 Canal street, Manchester, New Hampshire. Published in January, March, May, July, September, and November by the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, 345 East 47 Street, New York, New York 10017. All manuscripts should be submitted only to R. C. Reid, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Room 12-190, Cambridge, Mass. 02139. Statements and opinions in the *AIChE Journal* are those of the contributors, and the American Institute of Chemical Engineers assumes no responsibility for them. Subscription: one year, member \$8.00; non-member \$35.00; additional yearly postage, Canada \$1.00, Pan American Union \$1.50, other foreign \$2.00 (foreign subscriptions payable in advance). Single copies: \$10.00. Second-class postage paid at New York, N. Y. and additional mailing offices. Copyright 1971 by the American Institute of Chemical Engineers. National headquarters of AIChE is concerned about nondelivery of copies of the *AIChE Journal* and urgently requests subscribers to give prompt notification of any change of address. Sixty days must be allowed for changes to be made in the records.

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A New Journal Format

There are in general two principal types of individuals who read research-oriented journals. One, having located a cross-reference concerning an article of immediate value to him, opens the journal to a specific page and reads only that particular paper. The other usually subscribes to the journal and has good intentions about reading many articles in each issue, some superficially and some carefully.

Given these two groups, we raise the following question: Does our journal presently provide a format to encourage the latter type of reader? A questionnaire to Journal readers last year indicates that we do not. We are therefore experimenting with a new format which we hope will make the Journal of more immediate value to its readers.

In attempting to analyze how a typical reader would like to use the Journal, we must first consider the Table of Contents. We now list all article titles on the covers to encourage a quick scan of the contents. Second, for a somewhat detailed description of the papers, we plan to place all abstracts together in the last pages of each issue. These may be quickly read and those of interest noted.

Third, should an article be of possible interest to the reader, we feel that he should have available a synopsis so that he may quickly determine the scope, results, and any significant conclusions. Finally, should the material be of immediate interest, he has the main body of the paper.

In formulating this four-step sequence, we asked several authors who were revising their papers to accommodate them to this format, that is, to write Scope and Summary sections to be placed at the beginning of the paper. We show examples of these new sections in the first seven papers of this issue; several more will appear in the September issue.

In the Scope the author was to define the problem attacked and to show its importance; in the Summary he was to tell briefly what was done, to give the key results and conclusions, and to point out the significance of the work (that is, to justify its value to the profession). Both these sections were to be written for the general reader, not for the specialist. The remainder of the paper was to be directed toward those actively working in the field. We hope with these additions to allow more readers to recognize problems and to appreciate significant results in areas outside their principal involvement.

Letters to the Editor commenting on this new format will be welcomed. We need to make the contents of the Journal more accessible to the busy reader, and we are interested to learn whether these format changes are in the right direction. After evaluating the response, we will publish in the September issue, Instructions to Contributors, which will be applicable to new manuscripts submitted after January 1, 1972.