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Page Charges

Editors of technical journals are not directly involved with the assessment of page charges; nor should we be. Yet in an editor's dealings with authors, this subject is often raised.

Page charges originated with the growth of sponsored research. The reasoning has been that the dissemination of significant results is essential to any research program. Therefore, sponsors were expected to share in the costs of publication. Grant proposals should be written to cover such costs. Nonsupported research can still be published without page charges although sometimes with irritating reluctance on the part of publishers.

Yet not all journals assess page charges. Two classes of publications which do not assess page charges are the nonresearch technical publications (such as *Chemical Engineering Progress* or *Chemical Engineering*), and the research-oriented journals published by commercial firms (such as *Chemical Engineering Science*, *Chemical Engineering Journal*, or *Chemical Engineering Communications*). Only the research-oriented, professional society journals resort to page charges. The AIChE Journal is a member of this class.

Why the difference? The first group of journals is supported by member dues (for society publications), advertising, and to some degree, inexpensive subscriptions. The second group simply establishes subscription rates which are sufficiently high to cover expenses. The last group, in an effort to hold prices down, assesses page charges. Many professional societies depend heavily on page charge income. For example, 16% of all the ACS revenue from books and journals now comes from page charges. This amounts to some \$900,000 per year. On the average, 50% of all ACS authors pay such charges. The AIChE cannot boast such support.

From my vantage point, I conclude that most authors are opposed to the concept of page charges; many have begun to submit to those journals which have no charges. However, publishers of society journals are adamant as to their necessity. Most sponsors are still willing to pay page charges if required for publication. Libraries are grateful for the effort to hold down the cost of society publications. Is there any solution to this vexing problem?

There must be many solutions, and we encourage our readers to express their opinions. To stimulate replies, we suggest one solution which follows to some degree the policies established by the Petroleum Research Foundation. Let each governmental or private agency pay page charges for papers published as a result of sponsored research. A maximum charge would be established and would vary with the total grant. For papers published with an acknowledgment to the sponsoring agency, the page charge bill would automatically be submitted to the sponsoring agency.

With such a procedure, the delicate financial balance of society journals would not be upset. Researchers would be spared the necessity of estimating a priori the publication costs. Sponsoring agencies would most likely save money in that they would not have to pay publication costs on those projects from which no publishable paper resulted.

This suggestion is not new and was apparently rejected as a desirable policy in a recent study (Report of the Task Force on the Economics of Primary Publications, 1970). Nevertheless, we must recognize that authors are becoming increasingly reluctant to comply with page charges (and are paying them less frequently) so that an alternative system would appear necessary if society journals are to maintain their moderate prices.