

Selecting a Publication Vehicle

There is a new phenomenon in technical publishing that poses a threat to effective communication as well as to library budgets. This is the "conference proceedings" volume, which now seems to be a mandatory adjunct to specialized meetings. Preprints for limited distribution to facilitate discussion at a conference are useful things, but not when they are subsequently offered to libraries and the public in the form of expensive, unrefereed (and often illegible) volumes. There is rarely any justification for this practice, and papers that should be subjected to rigorous review prior to publication in archival journals are lost in a morass of otherwise unpublishable pages.

Contributors to conference proceedings often seem unaware that *AIChE Journal* will not consider any research paper which is based on material that has been published elsewhere, whether or not the authors consider the prior publication to be "archival." The ethical reason for this position should be obvious: one publication is all that is appropriate, and an author always has the option of selecting the preferred publication venue. There is usually a lesser practical reason as well; the author has already assigned the copyright elsewhere.

I have sometimes been told that proceedings volumes offer an important means of rapid publication. The frequent one- to two-year lag between meeting date and availability belies this rationalization. In contrast, the average time from the initial receipt of a manuscript to final publication was eleven months for papers and R&D Notes published in Vol. 34 (1988) of *AIChE Journal*; this average includes papers in which authors took as much as one year to return a revision. The average lag from receipt of a final revision to publication was five months.



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