

# Refining the Aims of *AIChE Journal*

*AIChE Journal* grew in several respects during 1993. Topical headings introduced at the beginning of the year have highlighted the diversity of subject matters published. Meanwhile, the number of submissions grew by almost 20% from 501 in 1992 to about 600 in 1993. The diversity and growth of research in our field, however, place the *Journal* at a crossroad, a decision point. Do we expand the number of pages by maintaining the current acceptance rate (at 46% in 1993) or tighten the rate by setting new standards for articles to be published? What new standards would be desirable?

These questions have been discussed among the Consulting Editors. We feel that with the latter course the state of the art of the entire spectrum of chemical engineering research will be better represented in the *Journal*, as stated in my July 1991 editorial and earlier by my predecessor, Morton Denn. Two criteria are particularly important in achieving this objective. First, the work should contain some substantial novelty or significance to the field: it should not be merely technically correct and incremental in its contribution. That sort of work is more suitable to a journal for specialists, not to the publication that speaks to the entire chemical engineering research community. We strive to insure that the *Journal* maintains the highest possible standard of significance to the profession.


The second criterion relates to the first. Work addressed to the general readership of the *Journal* should be described in research articles in such a way that the main points can be understood by a broad spectrum of readers. We do not intend to return to the format of several years ago that offered a group of specialized sections prior to the main text explaining the article in abbreviated and understandable terms to the general readership. *Journal* pages are at too much of a premium to do this now. We insist that the introduction section of the text be used to make the key points for nonspecialists. Articles with no appeal other than to experts of a narrow subfield of chemical engineering will be declined.

This should not be interpreted that the *Journal* aims

to reach a common denominator among us. We should all be interested in research developments of extraordinary novelty and significance in all fields of chemical engineering, which is the *Journal's* aim as well. Sophistication in research aims or techniques must not be reduced; however, major advances should be presented in such a way that nonexperts can grasp the significance.

A corollary to these points concerns the length of articles. As we all know, readership tails off when an article is too long. A not-terribly-rigorous analysis I did recently indicates that the average length of a research article has increased from about 8 pages ten years ago to about 11 pages now. This trend does not help the aim of general accessibility of new research results. Although no page limits will be imposed, authors should consider whether long articles are in the best interest of communication of their results. Further, authors should reevaluate R&D notes as a means of effective presentation. We do not and will not treat notes as a kind of booby prize for work not quite good enough to be a research article. Rather, I can imagine a time when a note might take on a preeminent status as a readily digestible and compact presentation of research results of exceptional significance.

We believe that suggested changes in the publication criteria will improve the quality of articles and the influence of the *Journal* on the future of chemical engineering research. The *Journal* authors and referees will see that these issues are treated by a slightly modified set of questions addressed to reviewers. While these changes are modest, they will enhance the reputation of the *AIChE Journal* as a publication vehicle with unparalleled influence and prestige.



**Matthew Tirrell**