



Editorial

Jack D. Gaskill, Editor

To Be or Not to Be a Referee

In my editorial entitled "The Review Process," which appeared in the September/October 1985 issue of *Optical Engineering*, I discussed the important role that referees play in determining the fate of manuscripts submitted to technical journals. In the present editorial I describe the procedures we employ in selecting referees and some of the difficulties we encounter in making the decision to publish or reject a manuscript.

When I receive a manuscript, I attempt to identify two individuals who are experts in the subject area of the manuscript. This is not always easy to do, because I simply do not know who the experts are in all of the various subject areas of optical engineering. To compound the problem, I try to avoid asking anyone to review more than one paper per year, which automatically eliminates some individuals who would otherwise be appropriate referees for particular papers.

If I cannot identify enough "true" experts for a specific subject, I next try to find reviewers who are at least generally knowledgeable about the subject area—a task that is usually somewhat simpler. When I have finally determined some combination of experts and pseudoexperts, the sum of which is two, Martha Stockton, my Associate Editor, sends copies of the manuscript to these individuals.

We ask the referees to review the paper within three or four weeks if possible and to let us know that they will be able to do so by promptly returning a prestamped, self-addressed card to us. If they feel unqualified, have a conflict of interest, or simply don't have time, we ask them to recommend other potential referees and return everything to us promptly in a prestamped, self-addressed envelope. Even though we have tried to make it easy for prospective referees to either accept or decline our request, all too frequently we get absolutely no response. Even after repeated attempts to make contact by phone or mail, we often are unable to obtain a response of any kind from some individuals. Needless to say, this annoying occurrence tends to delay publication.

Another problem—not annoying, but interesting—is encountered when two "experts" recommend different courses of action: one "expert" recommends publication because "the paper is new, important, well written, and represents a significant contribution to the literature," whereas the other "expert" recommends rejection because "the paper merely rehashes previous work, is poorly written, has no obvious application, and does not make a significant contribution." In these cases, I try to find a third "expert" to act as a tiebreaker; however, one or the other of the original referees tends to be a bit miffed when her or his recommendation is not followed.

Still another problem is encountered when the address we have for a prospective referee is not current and no forwarding address is known. This happens more frequently than one might expect, but perhaps this shouldn't be too surprising for a society as mobile as ours.

In my next editorial I plan to give some suggestions for referees that I hope will be helpful to them as they perform their duties. In the meantime, I would welcome reader comments about the review process.

Special Issue Calls for Papers

May 1989

Industrial Applications of Optical Signal Processing III

Guest Editor

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The May 1989 special issue of *Optical Engineering* will be devoted to the continuation of our series of special issues on Industrial Applications of Optical Signal Processing. This special issue will be devoted to architectures and systems that can be used in industrial applications that require advanced optical signal processing techniques. The issue will cover the following areas: optical information processing, including linear, nonlinear, and space variant operations and transforms; pattern recognition, correlation, hybrid optical/digital systems, multiclass distortion invariant object identification, and related applications of optical architectures for associative memories; automatic object inspection, feature extraction, and classification; applications for holography, including computer-generated holography; and acousto-optic signal processing systems.

Papers will also be included on applications of optical techniques to systems that require adaptive massively parallel, fault tolerant capabilities using the implementation of associative memory and neural networks. These include adaptive

pattern recognition models, competitive learning, image processing models, specialized neural network models, computational analysis, and their optoelectronic implementation.

Authors are encouraged to submit manuscripts on any of the above topics for inclusion in the special issue. Manuscripts submitted for consideration should be sent to the Guest Editor before October 15, 1988.

June 1989

Applications of Holography II

Guest Editor

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Improved materials, new processing methods, and new innovations by holographers and optical systems designers have led to wider and wider usage of holograms. Nearly everyone carries a credit card with a hologram, holographic headup displays are making their way into commercial applications, and a variety of holographic techniques show promise in such diverse fields as optical computing and broadband imaging systems.

The June 1989 special issue of *Optical Engineering* will chronicle recent advances in the applications of holography. This special issue will cover a variety of application areas,