



### 1998 in Review

This editorial continues Brian Thompson's tradition of describing the state of *Optical Engineering* during the past year.

This was a transition year when the last of the papers submitted to Brian were published and the new papers were reviewed under our revised procedure and published. By April all of Brian's papers were completed and the few stragglers were transferred to me. On the whole, the process, detailed in the March 1998 editorial ("Fasten your seat belts, . . ."), has gone off without a hitch. However, one of the things we did not count on was the large number of image processing papers. In response I asked Bahram Javidi to join the board of editors and he has assisted admirably. As the year progressed, it was clear there were other omissions in our coverage, so I also added Angus Macleod to cover thin films and Casimer DeCusatis for fiber optics. I want to thank them and all of those on the Board of Editors for their help in instituting this new reviewing procedure.

I also want to thank Dave Begley, who is leaving the Board of Editors. He is the Symposium Chair for the Annual Meeting in Denver this summer and will have his hands full. Gary Kamerman of FastMetrix will take over for Dave. Also, my thanks to Glenn Boreman, who is now Editor of the Optical Technology and Biomedical Division of *Applied Optics*, for his support. His specialty will be covered by Ron Driggers of the Army Communications and Electronics Command.

So what happened to *Optical Engineering* in 1998? Most of this can be presented in a few short tables.

Table 1 Major statistics for 1998 and percentage changes since 1997.

Number of journal pages	3336	-5.7%
Number of technical pages	3164	-6.4%
Number of papers published	413	-3.3%

Part of this slight drop might be attributed to a slightly longer turnaround time over previous years because our review process has an additional step in it. We're new at this thing.

	Number	%	1998 vs 1997
Regular papers published	275	66.6%	-14.9%
Special papers published	138	33.4%	+32.7%
Regular papers received	485		+4.1%
Special papers received	94		-32.4%

One of the unknown factors in publishing *Optical Engineering* is the response to special sections and the number of special sections that are organized in any given year. In the past year there were a number of special sections with a large number of contributions. This helped push up the number of special section papers that were published, but the number of special section papers received in 1998 was much smaller, which means this contribution will decline this year. The topic of special sections deserves and will get additional consideration in another editorial. The modest increase in regular papers received would indicate that this journal continues to serve as an accepted vehicle for the publication of papers in optical engineering.

Table 2 Number of papers published by region of first author in 1998.

Region	No. of papers
Africa	2
Asia	114
Australia	7
Eastern Europe	13
Middle East	14
South/Central America	4
North America	174
Western Europe	85

Table 3 Number of papers from the U.S. in 1998 by state of first author.

No. of papers	State
16	Ohio
15	California
12	Massachusetts
11	Michigan
10	New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia
9	Arizona
7	Texas
6	Florida, Indiana
5	Alabama, Maryland, New Jersey
3	Illinois, New Hampshire
2	Alaska, Georgia, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, South Carolina, Vermont
1	Colorado, Connecticut, Iowa, Minnesota, New Mexico, Nebraska, North Dakota, Wisconsin

Ohio? Ohio! I can hardly believe it. In 1997, first authors from California published 22 papers, while there were only 8 from Ohio. As a native Ohioan, born in Akron, I'm amazed. Ohio generates more optical engineering papers than California! Quite a difference! (For the curious, most of the papers come from the Dayton area, so this is probably a Wright-Pat phenomenon.)

Table 4 Outcomes of papers acted on in 1998.

Accepted	236	60.36%
Declined	92	23.53%
Closed	49	12.53%
Withdrawn	7	1.79%
Transferred	7	1.79%
Total	391	100.00%

The acceptance ratio is 5% lower than last year. This ratio has varied between 60% and 70% since 1991 with last year's figure at the low end of that range. Part of this may be due to the change in the reviewer selection process. The addition of Associate Editors improves our ability to select reviewers who are particularly knowledgeable about an area in optical engineering. This may have led to the smaller acceptance ratio.

As editor, one of the numbers that I watch is the ratio of the number of papers acted upon (391 from the final line in Table 4) to the number of papers received this year (485 regular papers received as indicated in Table 1). What this means is that we are not reviewing and deciding on papers as rapidly as we should. This will be addressed during the coming year.

Table 5 Activity of the editorial office in 1998 (regular papers only).

		% change vs 1997
Reviewers selected	1189	+0.25%
Reviews received	622	-18.0%
Revised manuscripts received	253	-9.3%
Papers returned to authors for revision	251	-19.8%
Communication papers received	10	-58.3%

Note that the reviews received have gone down substantially. This may be due to the selection process used by the Associate Editors. Currently we do not provide them with any feedback as to who declined to review and who said they would review and then didn't. This year we will try to provide them with this information.

When the year began *Optical Engineering* had virtually no reviewer database to speak of. We began by entering authors from last year's papers and then an appeal was made by e-mail to our members. That garnered nearly 700 additional potential reviewers. Currently the SPIE reviewer database includes 5000 persons including reviewers for *Optical Engineering's* sister journals.

I want to thank all of those who have volunteered to review. I particularly want to thank the nearly 700 reviewers who responded so generously to our request for assistance. I am impressed by the care and dedication that they take in reviewing the papers. Rare is the one-line review: "Looks OK. Publish it." In most cases, reviewers take the time to go beyond an evaluation of the correctness of the work at hand and provide the authors with additional insight, arguments, and suggestions to improve the paper.

So, what do you have to look forward to in Y2K-1? Following the lead of the Proceedings department at SPIE, we will begin to accept manuscripts electronically. This should provide authors, particularly those overseas, with rapid submission of their papers. Eventually, we hope to be able to transmit the papers electronically to reviewers, so that the time and trouble of mailing manuscripts will be eliminated. I have a few additional initiatives in mind, but they have been put on hold until it is determined whether the merger of SPIE and OSA goes forward.

I appreciate the kind comments and e-mail about these editorials that I have received during the year. I get a great deal of enjoyment out of writing them.

Finally, I must thank Carolyn Labes, the Managing Editor, and Chris Engebo for their efforts in getting this journal out each month. Rita Rogers was hired for the express purpose of managing this new electronic review process and handling, what is to me, a recalcitrant database for tracking manuscripts. She has done a great job of coping with life's little surprises.

**Donald C. O'Shea**  
Editor