

How to Get into AIAA Journal without Really Trying, or the Editors and the "System"

Facts and Fiction

Every author, and his long suffering typist (including editors), has struggled, at one time or another, with the formidably complete Information for Contributors on the last page of these Journals, as well as the Bill of Rights for Authors. The following is in the nature of a commentary on how the system really works:

The Procedure:

Papers are received "over the transom" (a colorful publication acronym for the United States mail) or as papers accepted for presentation at meetings and submitted for publication. Receipt is acknowledged and generally all correspondence and interaction is handled through the permanent AIAA Journal Staff, ably led by Miss Ruth Bryans of whom more later. With due consideration of the authors' wishes, the staff tentatively assigns it to one of the three Journals of AIAA.

We cannot forbear here to note again that there are three Archive Journals: the Journal of Spacecraft and Rockets with a Systems and Design Orientation; the Journal of Aircraft, covering Aircraft and Marine Systems, and AIAA Journal, covering Applied Research and Exploratory Development.

As a next step, the paper receives a cursory review by the Editor-in-Chief as to suitability for AIAA, general interest, content, etc. Occasionally, a paper is recommended to a different audience and Journal, either within AIAA or not yet a member of the AIAA commonwealth. On papers deemed suitable, he notes his sage comments and dispatches the paper for action to an Associate Editor expert in the field. This luminary, the Star of our Farm System, faces the issue squarely and usually, but not necessarily, with the aid of reviewers (see gratitude and impressive list below) comes to a decision. The author is then notified through Ruth Bryans of action, which usually includes detailed comments, suggestions for omission (e.g., the 218th derivation of the Navier-Stokes equations), relevant portions of review reports (complaints of the reviewer on his overload, as well as possible violations of the U. S. mail code are omitted). The Editor-in-Chief reviews many of the rejections and handles the action in cases returned to him by the Associate Editor (because of incompetence, conflict of interest, general malaise, or indecision). Authors receive a notice of tentative acceptance or rejection generally within three months of submittal. The stately minuet of rebuttal and reply is welcomed by the Editors when specific and constructive and

often is instrumental in reversing the decision for the benefit of all concerned.

Theses, Contract Reports, and Similar Publications:

The audience of the Journal is assumed to be mathematically sophisticated, technically literate, and selective in its detailed reading. Thus, neither the thorough detail and scholarship of the graduate thesis nor the subtle signs of obeisance to contractual discipline of cost, schedule, and data appropriate in the Contract Reports, nor the proud proprietary detail and internal relevance of the company report is suitable for Journal consideration without a change in format. And if there has been prior major dissemination of the information as in certain NASA reports, the need for exposure is considered to have been served. The desired format of a Journal paper is concise, the content essentially new, the detail that which is necessary for comprehension—for the user usually is a contributor in the field, aware of its history, sophisticated in his tools, and eager for new information—we think!!

Quality and Content:

The audience of AIAA Journal is the sector of the Aerospace Technical Community engaged in technology at its leading edge—Applied Research and Exploratory Development. We aim to be a representative record of new achievement for a great technical community of a common thrust. We aim for the perfect compromise; between pure knowledge and utility, between perfection and inclusiveness, between completeness and conciseness, between the timelessly perfect and the timely imperfect. And of course we fail—we hope a little gloriously. And a measure of success—if the success of a Journal is indeed measurable—is the number and quality of our subscribers.

Prejudices—Present and Future:

On *Applied Mathematics*: As a tool we assume total expertise of our audience. Nonsignificant mathematical exploration or elegance per se is therefore discouraged. Nonelegance (i.e., computer solutions) must prove broad interest, some generality, and illumination of the physical problem under

consideration. The vital continued development of applied mathematics and computer technology is well served by other competent Journals.

On *Experimental Data*: We assume an audience of Engineers, interested in illumination of a physical condition for the purposes of synthesis or analysis of a useful device. The important function of careful cataloguing of properties and numerical data is served by authoritative Data Journals. We fight for the privilege of presenting an experimental exploration of a theoretical model and relevant experimental data or vice versa.

On *The Future*: Editors attempt to sense and anticipate the thrust of the technical field they serve and stimulate it if they can and dare. In a time of profusion of theoretical models, we have been harsh on theoretical models and more receptive to experimental illumination. It now appears that perhaps another period of destruction or modification of the "old wisdom" and synthesis of new models and understanding is at hand. And we hope that the pages of the Journal will reflect the turbulence, critical dialogue, and new creation for—as in all of nature—only change is permanent.

Appreciation and Gratitude:

We wish to express our gratitude and appreciation to our retiring Associate Editors: Bernard Budiansky, Franz T. Geyling, Paul A. Libby, Edwin L. Resler, and Igor Jurkevich. If the Journal merits approval, these gentlemen have earned a very large share. As we wipe away a furtive tear, may they regain the friendship of their families, the freedom of their evenings and weekends (with a little occasional reviewing), and may their handwriting improve—for our next association.

We also express our deep gratitude to our reviewers listed below who indeed deserve a major share of credit for the pursuit of excellence characteristic of the Aerospace Technical Community and its Journals. The Editor-in-Chief also wishes to express his personal appreciation to Authors and Editors for the stimulation and pleasure he derives from his participation in this aspect of the great endeavor.

Leo Steg
Editor-in-Chief

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