

Where We Are Now

IN this editorial, I will give the status of a number of facets of the *AIAA Journal* that affect readers and authors.

- **Subscriptions:** The *AIAA Journal* total circulation is now 3,429. It is mailed chiefly to members, nonmembers, and students. From one year ago, the membership subscriptions have declined by 150 and students by 59. The change in member subscriptions is not unexpected, because of the reductions in the aerospace industry. Likewise, less students are enrolled in aerospace curricula. But nonmember subscriptions have decreased by only 26, to 1,326. I believe that this negligible decrease is due to the expansion of aerospace suppliers, especially internationally (see below), as well as to increased efforts by AIAA marketing staff.
- **Foreign submissions:** The number of foreign, that is, non-U.S. submissions to the *AIAA Journal* has increased substantially during the past few years. It now stands at 40% of all submissions. If one thinks that foreign aerospace research is generally below the U.S. standard, then the following may be surprising: The ratio of foreign acceptances to all acceptances is 41%! One need not be reminded that jet aircraft were first developed in Germany and Italy, and the first practical jet engine in England. The internationalization of aerospace is bound to continue, almost everywhere.
- **Publication delays:** The statistic of the time to acceptance of a full-length paper is bimodal: it's either five or six months, or much longer. The latter seems to be due to the length of time it takes the author(s) to revise the paper. The former time is still excessive; it should be three months, but it seems to be controlled by the review process (see below).

For full-length papers, the time from acceptance to publication is 5.75 months, which is an improvement of 1.5 months since January 1994. There are good prospects for further reduction. Technical Notes have been averaging about 4.5 months to acceptance, but similarly 5.73 months to publication. This time was not supposed to be that long; it is being changed so that Notes will be scheduled for publication promptly after acceptance.
- **Track A and Track B:** First, I would like to reiterate that publication charges are *still* not mandatory. Nor is it a new policy to request authors to pay publication charges. Now the policy is that 80% of each issue of *AIAA Journal* will contain papers for which publication charges are paid (track A), and 20% will be papers for which publication charges are not paid (track B). This change was made because only about 50% of the accepted papers were paying publication charges, which is not sufficient to support the Journal with the existing subscription base and prices. At least we know that each issue of the Journal will have 80% paid publication charges. But the recent statistic seems to be that still only 50% of accepted papers are committed to publication charges. The result is that the time from acceptance to publication of track A papers is being reduced to four months (we can't go below three months because of production time), but the publication delay for track B is now 15 months. The policy of tracks A and B will be reviewed by the Publications Committee in January.
- **Acceptance ratio:** This has decreased to about 55%, from 70% just a few years ago. I cannot tell if the submitted papers are lower in quality or whether we are being more selective; I hope it is the latter.
- **Submissions:** The number of papers submitted during the past year was 630, which is 20 less than last year. This indicates that

the reduction in U.S. aerospace research was compensated by foreign submissions last year.

- **Reviewers:** I compiled the reviewer list from my computer records. The *AIAA Journal* associate editors nominated about 1500 reviewers; but only 844 reviewers actually responded with reviews. In a few cases, the reviewer selected was not sufficiently expert in the topic of the paper. But I found many of our regular contributors refused to review papers. This is probably excusable if an excessive number of papers were sent to that person during the year; perhaps three or four should be the limit. But if one wishes to publish, one should also review. Perhaps we should have a policy that we consider only one paper from an individual per n reviews!
- **Production:** When I first joined the *AIAA Journal*, type was set with a linotype machine by outside compositors. For you young people, a linotype machine has a keyboard that selects letter molds that goes down a chute into a tray. A column is justified by a device that pushes wedges between words. Lead is then cast into the molds, and when it solidifies, one has a line of type which then goes into another tray to build up a column. Equations were generally set by hand. This was becoming more and more expensive; but then there was a technological invention: phototype, in which masks of individual type were exposed onto film, which was then developed and could be used for offset printing or making etchings. AIAA, and many others, found that the costs for composing using these machines were much lower than with the linotype; and we went "in-house" with phototype machines. Now, desktop publishing using computers and laser graphics are the state of the art, which outside compositors can operate at lower expense than at AIAA. So, starting with the November issue of the *AIAA Journal*, we are once again going outside for composition. The result was that there was a start-up delay in mailing the November and December issues; but hopefully this issue arrived on time.
- **Acknowledgments.** We should all be grateful to the Editorial staff of the AIAA for the production and cost control of this journal: Norma Brennan (Division Director, Journals) and Jacqueline Dupree (Managing Editor, Journals). Special thanks are due to our outgoing Associate Editors: John T. Batina, H. Wilhelm Behrens, Chung K. Law, Irving U. Ojalvo, Gerald C. Paynter, George J. Simitzes, Frank W. Spaid, and John J. Tracy. They have all upheld the high standards of this journal. Welcome also to our new Associate Editors: Alex Berman, K. Kailasanath, Rakesh K. Kapnia, George A. Kardomateas, Gabriel Laufer, Anthony M. Waas, and Richard W. Wlezien. Finally, appreciation to our reviewers who reviewed papers for the *AIAA Journal*. Their names are below.

George W. Sutton
Editor-in-Chief

