

A Review of Our Procedures

THIS journal constitutes one piece of the archival literature. It serves the guidance, control, and dynamics community and is primarily aerospace oriented. Each article we publish, however, has much in common with articles in the archival literature base. It is a step in the evolution of knowledge in the field in which the contribution is made. It extends the base of previous understanding in the technical area to which it contributes and, as such, has lasting importance as a piece of the evolution. When looked back upon in future years, a technical historian could place each article in sequence in the development of knowledge. In a current context, each paper is something that other workers in the field can build upon to continue the evolution. Journal articles undergo a methodical technical review process. This assures those using the literature as a basis for their own work that technical experts in the area have read the paper and have recommended it for publication on the basis that it is correct and, in their judgment, represents a significant contribution to the literature. Clearly, in order for such contributions to be useful and to serve as a basic building element for the evolution of knowledge, the papers must be published in a timely fashion.

What is the role of the editorial team for this journal and any other like it? We are simultaneously administrators of the process of bringing manuscripts to print and the judges who listen to the jury (the reviewers) and serve sentences on each contribution to our journal. This journal, like all of the other AIAA journals and most professional society publications, is run by volunteer help. The principal volunteers are the editors and the reviewers. Until now, the AIAA has sought to reduce the clerical burden upon these volunteers, particularly the editors, by maintaining a full-time staff in New York to provide editorial, record-keeping, management, and production services. The intent was to let the volunteer editors focus their time on the technical issues. The cost for this has been twofold: a few extra steps in manuscript handling in order to have the manuscripts pass through the New York office at various stages, plus of course the financial cost of maintaining the staff in AIAA Headquarters. With the beginning of this AIAA Fiscal Year in October, we have made a dramatic change to this system. The number of full-time employees of the AIAA has been reduced. All clerical and management chores will now be assumed by the volunteer editor team; only the production of the journals will remain as a significant activity at the AIAA Headquarters. We are hopeful that once the system reaches its steady-state operating condition, both authors and readers will be better served by having articles reach print sooner.

What are the new handling procedures? They are quite simple: authors who wish to publish articles in this journal should submit them directly to me at the address indicated on the opposite cover. I will take a quick look at the article and, unless it's clearly out of scope or not an archival contribution, I will assign it to the Associate Editor whose technical specialty most closely matches the paper. He will examine it more carefully, and, unless he believes there is a basic flaw in the paper, he will send the paper to approximately three technical experts in the area for review. When he receives these reviews, he will exercise his judicial function and make the fundamental decision on the paper as to whether or not it should be accepted. If it requires revision, he will write an evaluation outlining to the author the revisions required. He will then communicate this information directly to the author, normally providing the reviews as well. If the paper requires revision, the author will be asked to revise the paper and resubmit it to the appropriate Associate Editor. If it is acceptable, we will advise the author and mail the paper to New York for it to be typeset and put in line for publication in the next available issue.

The authors, the editors involved, the reviewers, and the production staff in New York City from time to time all require knowledge of the status of manuscripts. Since these manuscripts could be at any time almost anywhere in the world, we are hopeful that we can computerize the record-keeping process. Until now, all records have been kept manually at a central location (AIAA Headquarters). Those who have visited our New York offices know that there is a large amount of floor space and time dedicated to the keeping of files and records. The editorial team for this journal has volunteered for a computerization experiment and is developing a system in which all of the above people can be linked to expedite the process of managing the rather large data base of information involved in getting hundreds of manuscripts every year routed to the appropriate people in a controlled fashion. The core of this system is in place and is being used by the editors on an experimental basis. It is our hope that we can make this fully operational and be able to offer better service to our authors as a result. Eventually, we hope to have both authors and reviewers capable of dealing with us directly in this automated system.

If we are truly to save time in the publication process, we will require help from both authors and reviewers. What can authors do? The answer to this is fairly simple. Pay very careful attention to the instructions for preparation and revision of manuscripts. Manuscripts which are prepared correctly will be ready for typesetting when they arrive in New York after the editors have recommended publication. When the manuscript arrives at the AIAA Headquarters after acceptance, it will be the first time professional copy editors and experts in production will have seen the paper. If, for example, the figures are inadequate for any reason, such as lettering size or denseness of the curves, if the references are not in the proper format, or if the English needs considerable work, the paper will have to be returned to the author for additional revision at that stage. If this were to occur, most of the time saved with our new procedures would have been lost for that particular author. The Associate Editor will attempt to guide authors on what needs to be changed, but I don't expect them to be as thorough as the professional staff at AIAA Headquarters has been all of these years. We've made one other change where authors can help the process. We are soliciting with the submission of each manuscript, on a voluntary basis, the names and addresses of five people who the author feels would be qualified reviewers. This will aid the Associate Editors in the selection of suitable reviewers and, hopefully, give them a larger base of people upon which to draw than normally would be the case. It is our hope that the spreading of the review burden across a larger base will enable the reviewers whom we use to return reviews in a more timely and reliable fashion.

What can reviewers do? The single most important thing we need is a quality review returned in a timely fashion. The most common cause of a paper being delayed in the process (and an author becoming irritated with us for not returning his paper) is the inability to get reviews back in a timely fashion. Reviewers are one of our most precious commodities. All reviewers should be assured that their work is very much appreciated by the Associate Editors and, hopefully, most of our authors as well. Without them the process simply cannot work. Printed in this issue are the names of all the reviewers who have been kind enough to assist us in the period between November 1, 1981 and October 31, 1982. I personally would like to thank all of them for their help. As guidance to our future reviewers, I offer my opening paragraph above. Anything you can do to help the editors determine what is new in the paper, what contribution it makes, how it relates to previously published work, what needs to be changed in order to make the paper a more usable document upon which other

people can base their work is exceptionally useful to the editor. We provided a large blank space on our review form because the information that reviewers provide in that space is far more valuable to us than the simple checking of boxes at the bottom of the form. We encourage you to over-communicate with us. The more you offer in terms of detail, the more useful your review is to both the editors and the author.

Because of the increase in paper submittals and the additional burden of handling what was previously performed by the AIAA full-time staff, we have added an additional Associate Editor to the editorial team. With that change, plus the normal rotation of duties, over fifty percent of our team is new. Your 1983 Editorial Board is introduced in this editorial.

Two of our Associate Editors have just retired after a three-year tour of duty. They are Dr. Narendra Gupta of Integrated Systems, Inc. and Dr. K.T. (Terry) Alfriend of the Naval Research Laboratory. They have both spent countless hours in the process of obtaining reviews and judging manuscripts. Their tenure has been in an environment of growth and an increasing workload. Their experience has been invaluable in enabling us to take the streamlining steps that I've outlined above. I will miss their dedication and skills. I wish them as continued high productivity with the time that's now being returned to their schedules as they provided this journal.

Donald C. Fraser
Editor-in-Chief

Reviewers for *Journal of Guidance, Control, and Dynamics*—1982*

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*Those who reviewed manuscripts late in the year will be listed in the January 1984 issue.