

The Latest News on Our Publications Program

In response to many expressions of dissatisfaction received at the Aerospace Sciences Meeting in New York, the Publications Committee, on March 5, held a lively five-hour discussion on author-prepared copy for the journals (including all recent inputs in response to our editorials and announcements) and related technical and economic considerations in our publication activities. The result was a decision **not to go to author-prepared copy** at this time. This decision was approved by the Board of Directors at its March meeting.

A part of the Publications Committee's decision, recognizing the continuing need for economy, was to empower this writer, with appropriate assistance, to find a less expensive way of composing the journals without loss in quality. We have been gathering information on that area since January, and we expect to implement a new system, beginning no later than the January 1972 issues, that will achieve an appreciable saving (~25% of composition costs or ~10% of the present total publication budget for the journals) in 1972.

This planned saving and the magnitude of the present year's effort on the SDD (Selective Dissemination of Documents) study are intimately tied to another pressing economic problem, about which some of you as authors have been greatly and rightly concerned: our backlogs. Both the *AIAA Journal* and the *Journal of Aircraft* have developed intolerable backlogs, with some accepted papers in the unpaid-page-charge category having been in that second bin for eight months or more. The backlog for the *Journal of Spacecraft and Rockets* also has begun to build. Ruth Bryans and I estimated the total cost of reducing the backlogs for these three journals to a normal 2-issue supply, based on the status as of the March 1971 issues, to be \$62,300 (including overhead distribution). This is no small amount of money in light of the present economic situation, but the Publications Committee voted that the Institute should do all in its power to accomplish the backlog reduction during the April 1971-March 1972 period.

The first step that has been taken is to reduce the scope of the SDD study for the present fiscal year (which ends in September) and transfer \$20,000 in direct expense funds from the SDD budget to the budget for the journals. The Board of Directors has approved this step, and with appropriate overhead transfer between these two budgets, it means that we can plan to accomplish approximately 40% of the backlog reduction by September. As a result, the aforementioned three journals will be larger than originally planned last October.

The effect of the fund transfer on the SDD study is, of course, to limit it rather severely. A planned development and detailed analysis of AIAA member profiles for matching to the total AIAA publication output cannot be done this year. However, some preliminary results have already been obtained by putting 3700 AIAA meeting papers from the past

three years through NASA's SCAN system to match them to the 186 SCAN profiles. This study by Bill Morris of the staff, under Jerry Grey's direction, has produced some interesting results, which Dr. Grey will report a few months from now, after they have also prepared some rough marketing estimates. A major result that appears to be developing from this inexpensive study is that a larger output base than the AIAA publications alone will be needed for a useful system. Many of you have suspected this and commented on it, but we have not previously had any recent numbers relative to our particular situation to use as a basis for decisions or planning.

Synoptics also received considerable lively discussion, especially by Nelson Kemp, a new member of the Publications Committee, and Stephen Maslen, Chairman of the Fluid Dynamics Technical Committee (see their comments at the Annual Meeting, reported in the March issue of *Astrodynamics & Aeronautics*). However, the consensus still is that this promising new form of technical communication, which is to be presented in a special new section in each journal, deserves the best try that we can give it. To assure that we do give it our best but do not allow it to affect detrimentally the publication of full papers, we will impose an extra layer of quality control review on Synoptics during the first four months or so of their publication. Thus, Synoptics are expected to be reviewed even more carefully than full papers for a time, and it is our intent that they will always be reviewed with care equal to that given full papers.

With respect to both percentages and numbers of Synoptics, we will start slowly. During the first year, at least, we expect that among new submissions we will be accepting 60% to 70% as many full papers as before. (While reducing our backlog, we will publish a greater number of full papers during the next 12 months than we had planned earlier.) We emphasize that the Synoptic is intended to be a means of improving communication and will, if it does its job, be read and used by more people than would be a full journal paper on the same work. A full backup paper will always be available, on request, either directly from the author or at cost from a recognized repository, to those who need it. The AIAA will take ultimate responsibility for assuring the availability of this backup, but we are investigating the possibility of cooperation with other national repository systems that may be able to provide the backup papers at lower cost to the members than AIAA could, at the same time avoiding wasteful duplication of storage and handling efforts.

To experiment with integrating Synoptics with meeting activities, we are asking Technical Committees to consider the possibilities of devoting a part of a session or one or two of a group of sessions to 10-minute presentations for which Synoptics would be preprinted and backup papers would be

available from the authors. Do you think there are attractive possibilities here?

We do not, cannot, deny that there is also an economic motivation to the use of Synoptics. We think this is proper and important both now and in the longer range. If you try to maintain instant-access, "hard-copy" files for your personal use, Synoptics can reduce the space *you* need for storage. The same will be true for your library. At the same time, a crucial problem in our publication economics is our dependence on voluntary page charges as the source of approximately half of the revenue that supports our four technical journals. It is our hope that some authors, and some authors' companies or institutions, who have been unable to pay page charges on full papers (6 to 7 pages) will find it possible to pay them on Synoptics (1 or 2 pages) which are known to be backed by their full papers or reports.

We believe that AIAA, building from its illustrious predecessors, the American Rocket Society and the Institute for Aerospace Sciences, has established journals of the highest quality and international esteem. We need your financial support in page charges and subscriptions and your

technical support in evaluating new ventures such as Synoptics. We will strive to present the best publications program possible in response to your needs and within the resources available. We will do everything feasible internally to streamline our procedures while maintaining the quality of the journals. We have just instituted new steps to place more responsibility on our Associate Editors for obtaining reviews and preparing instructions for authors to reduce staff load and costs and (hopefully) save some time in processing papers. Although such steps of decentralization are fraught with some dangers of miscues and confusion, the rewards may outweigh the problems.

We actively solicit your opinion. Please participate in discussions of these matters in your sections and at regional and national meetings, and be prepared to express your views in response to specific questions that may be passed down through or initiated by your section officers, Technical Committees, or other channels or canvasses. Otherwise, please write to us directly. We want to hear from you.

Gordon L. Dugger
Vice President-Publications