

Technical Publications

NEARLY 1,000 scientific papers have been printed on more than 4,000 pages of the Journal of the American Oil Chemists' Society in the last seven years. The reviewing, editing, and publishing of the approximately 6,000 tables and figures and of the 500,000 words which have comprised these papers have led to some general observations on the problems of technical publication. These might prove useful to authors in the preparation of more readable manuscripts and to the Journal by increasing the number of scientific papers published at lower unit costs.



A. R. Baldwin

All technical journals are having financial problems trying to make income keep pace with the expense of printing the rapidly growing volume of scientific papers. The struggle which the American Chemical Society has had in financing the publication of Chemical Abstracts attests to the extent of the various economic problems imposed by this flood of papers. The financing of the journals which publish the original papers and reports imposes similar problems even though they are on a much smaller scale.

If the scientific journals are to continue to perform the service for which they are organized, that is, to publish the worthwhile technical reports submitted to them and, and at the same time, to maintain black figures in the ledger, all possible approaches must be studied. Most journal managements have used one or more of the following means of meeting the challenge: increase in membership dues, subscription rates, and/or advertising rates; sponsorship of membership drives and promotion campaigns; and the limiting of the size or number of papers accepted for publication.

I FIRMLY BELIEVE that the author part of the publication team can do more at present than any other group in assisting journal staffs to meet the financial obligations without curtailment in any respect. Increased clarity and brevity in scientific papers would save the readers' time as well as reduce costs. With the tremendous volume of literature flooding over and around the "sciencereers,"

they have no time for superfluous words or duplication of data in tables, illustrations, and text. Time is valuable to readers of the Journal. Authors can perform a major service to them by extremely careful editing of manuscripts to insure transmittal of ideas and data with the greatest degree of clarity in a minimum of space.

The saving of space significantly reduces unit publication costs. For example, in our Journal each word costs about 3c to print. Tables, line drawings, and half-tone cuts cost about \$2.80, \$2.50, and \$3, respectively, per column inch. A condensation of 300 words and four column inches of tables or illustrations in any particular manuscript would save about \$20. Such reductions would allow publication of 12 to 15% more papers at no extra cost.

Authors generally are very conscious of the improved readability and reduced printing costs effected by increased brevity and clarity. In spite of good intentions however, the tendency to verbosity in varying degrees and to duplication is likely to entice authors away from lucubration. Only intensive editing and revision can achieve the best results.

MORE THAN 1,000 manuscripts have crossed my desk during the last seven years. I think it can be said without fear of successful contradiction that any one of them could have been reduced 10% in volume with simultaneous improvement in readability. Some could have been reduced 40 to 60%. In general, authors have been extremely cooperative and apparently very appreciative of the sincere efforts made by reviewers and associate editors in suggesting means of further editing of manuscripts. However, as a general rule, there is still some room for improvement in editing by authors and by our reviewing team.

In line with other attempts to extend the services which the Journal can render, two special committees have been appointed to revise the "Author's Style Sheet" and the "Directions for Manuscript Reviewing." J. B. Brown, D. H. Wheeler, and W. C. Ault will work on the former, and R. J. Vander Wal and J. C. Cowan will revise the latter. The new forms should be of material aid to authors, reviewers, and editors, in achieving a more concise style, which is all-important to readers and publishers alike. Such writing suggestions as are developed will not be intended to discourage the use of individual style. Rather, they should point the way to means of improving clarity and eliminating needless words.

Suggestions and comments are urgently solicited from everyone interested in this vital problem. Won't you send your ideas today?

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