

EDITORIAL

George Batchelor founded JFM in 1956 so that all the diverse aspects of fluid mechanics research could be encompassed in a single high-quality journal. In this endeavour he succeeded admirably. The Journal has enjoyed a central position in the field, first under Batchelor's leadership, and since 1996 under the guidance of David Crighton. In the nearly 50 years since it was founded, JFM has stood for the highest standards of scholarly work and its clear and logical presentation. Over that period of time the subject has remained vibrant while the science and the scientists have evolved. Through this editorial, we wish to raise with the readership a number of issues that we deem to be important and explain some of the action that will be taken.

Over the last couple of decades the percolation time for JFM papers – the average time from submission to publication – has been about 15 or 16 months, which is similar to that for other major journals. There are also occasional aberrations that have resulted in an individual paper percolating over a period of years! We aim to reduce the average percolation time to 12 months and the number of aberrations to near zero. The percolation time for a paper is the collective responsibility of the authors, the referees, the editors and the Press. JFM has direct control over the last two of these, and to some extent the second, and we shall reduce delays by instituting internal reforms and new guidelines for associate editors and referees, while maintaining the customary rigour of the process. We hope that authors will do their parts by replying to referees reports promptly, yet carefully and with a willingness to fine-tune their expositions.

Over the years the average paper in JFM has grown in length by a factor of more than two. From 1970 to 1990 the average length increased by 70% and this trend has continued. Undoubtedly, there is a negative correlation between a paper's length and its readership. We have asked the associate editors (and hence in turn the referees) to make detailed recommendations for the streamlining of papers. There remains no page limit for JFM papers, but the associate editors will exert a firmer hand in attempting to reverse the trend. The ultimate test for a paper's proper length is the density of ideas and results.

It is perceived, wrongly, that JFM publishes only papers of an 'archival' nature and does not view short papers favourably. To dispel this myth we are immediately creating a *fast track* for papers that are 10 or fewer printed pages. These will be handled by a designated associate editor, currently K. R. Sreenivasan, who will expedite the refereeing process and aim at the publication of these papers in 3–4 months from their initial submission. To accomplish this the papers must be prepared using the JFM latex style file and be submitted via e-mail. The papers will be recycled to the authors at most once; if further revisions are necessary, then they will revert to the regular track. These short papers will *not* be Letters, *nor* Rapid Communications, but normal JFM papers that will appear in the journal unsegregated from regular-track papers. There will be no compromise on the required standards of scientific quality and clarity of writing.

Fluid mechanics is an extremely vital subject in which traditional topics remain of interest while new ones enter the domain. In an effort to encourage the appearance in JFM of some of the latest topics of investigation, we will be appointing some new associate editors with special expertise who can attract such papers.

Steve Davis
Tim Pedley
June 2000