



### Advice to Authors

I know that this sounds like a very portentous title and I didn't really mean it to be. However, I wanted a title that would allow me to comment on the preparation of manuscripts—comments that may sound obvious. I have now looked at more than a thousand manuscripts since I became your editor and I can assure you that it isn't obvious to me that these comments are obvious!

Authors have a responsibility to themselves to prepare the best possible paper they can that describes their work. The more significant the technical content, the more important it is to present it clearly and concisely for the reader. I naively assume that the authors wish to make sure that every reader understands the importance and the context of the work that is being reported and its value to other workers in the field. Scientific and technical progress is made by many people working on problems with as much interconnection as possible; this interconnection is most often provided by conferences, conference proceedings, and journal articles.

My advice to those preparing manuscripts is to make sure that the concepts are conveyed clearly. Put yourself at the reader's desk as you write. Make the paper look good too! A good-looking manuscript with clear figures and well-presented data in graph and tabular form makes an excellent impression not only on your editor, but more importantly on the reviewers. The opposite is even more true; a manuscript that looks thrown together will create the impression that the work that is reported was conducted in the same manner.

My second piece of advice is to follow the format set forth for the journal as closely as possible, even if some of the requests seem odd. As you know, we publish the "Information for Contributors" in every issue of *Optical Engineering*. Following the format set forth in those guidelines makes your editor's life much easier and helps the manuscript move more easily through the review and publication process. One of my pet peeves as an editor and as a reader is an inadequate set of

references that contains serious errors in page number, or volume number or even gives the wrong journal. These errors are very difficult to spot, of course, although reviewers will often notice some of them just from their own familiarity with the field; so it really is an important author responsibility.

The bottom line of this discussion is that, as you can well imagine, I am not very sympathetic when an author has not prepared a good manuscript. I very often get proceedings papers that "will be rewritten after the review process" if the material and the content is judged suitable for the journal. If I accepted that idea I would end up going to reviewers twice! Another example is the author who sends in a report "that could be turned into a paper if . . ." Finally, there is the draft manuscript that arrives with a statement such as "thank you for your consideration of the preliminary version of a (possible) future manuscript."

### Editorial Anecdote

Overheard at a recent meeting: "*Optical Engineering* is becoming a very good journal and it will be even better when they start having the papers reviewed."

In case anyone is in doubt, it is a very good journal and it will get even better *because we have always had the papers reviewed*.

### Postscript

Even though I am writing this editorial in October, you will read it in December in the final issue of Volume 32. May I take this opportunity to thank all those involved in making *Optical Engineering* a first-rate journal: the authors, the reviewers, the staff in Rochester and Bellingham, our guest editors, and our book editor and his reviewers. Without all of you it wouldn't be possible.

**Brian J. Thompson**  
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