

Editorial

PAPER REVIEWS AND REFEREEING

IT IS PROBABLY not common for an editor to muse about the actions undertaken before a paper is accepted for publication. In a journal such as this one, refereeing and making decisions on paper acceptance, needs for revision or outright rejection are particularly difficult. The reasons lie in the broad spectrum of submitted papers. This broadness makes it difficult to know and to find referee specialists for every paper.

Often, referees fail to agree completely or in part on the merits of a paper. Particularly difficult areas are papers on engineering design and engineering policy. Approaches to design range from the looser to the more structured. Engineering policy is still very much culture dependent. Authors commonly do not know or even realize that national and local policies may not have a common denominator with approaches in other countries. In fact, I do not know of anyone who deals methodically with comparative studies of different approaches to engineering education. Such studies would make sense in a field that essentially should produce the same results irrespective of culture. Moreover, as the type of submissions are often unlike those submitted to other professional journals in that they do not always focus on a narrow scientific subject the range of approaches by authors is also very broad. I have tried to make a point of ensuring that submissions have something new or interesting to report. In particular papers should preferably contain an analysis of results if they proclaim some new approach to engineering education. We have been quite critical of many papers submitted recently, of which an ever-increasing proportion have been refused publication. I hope that this indicates a raising of the standards of the journal. No doubt it also stems from the greater number of papers being received. A journal receiving too few good papers has a choice of either reducing its standards, reducing page numbers or ceasing publication. If the accepted number of papers is increased, it is essential that the scientific standards of the contributions be kept at a satisfactory level. I believe that we have raised our standards in the past year. If more papers are going to meet these standards, then we will also expand the size of the journal by increasing the number of pages per issue. At the moment I am satisfied with our improved standards, which show that the philosophy of our journal is slowly being acknowledged by an ever-wider body of authors involved and also getting interested in the educational aspects of their job.

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