Optical Engineering

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2013 in Review

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I hope everyone is having a good New Year so far. For *Optical Engineering*, 2014 is going to be the continuation of some dramatic changes that we implemented in 2013. We added five major categories overseen by senior editors in the areas of:

Imaging Components, Systems, and Processing
Instrumentation, Techniques, and Measurement
Optical Design and Engineering
Fiber Optics, Communications, and Lasers
Materials, Devices, and Sensors.

Within each of these categories, we added quite a number of subcategories and additional associate editors to cover them. This change allowed for two important service aspects of *Optical Engineering*. First, it allows us to service our legacy core areas that *Optical Engineering* has historically provided for our constituents. Second, we are now better aligned with SPIE conferences in the areas that are healthy and growing. So far, it looks like the approach is working, but it will take some time to fully evaluate the impact of the changes. For the more classical review of the performance of *Optical Engineering*, we continue.

The number of journal pages, technical pages, and papers published this year were all down by just over 3% (Table 1). In 2010, 2011, and 2012, our growth rate was huge, almost doubling the number of papers published, so I am not that worried about the small reduction in published papers. Some of these papers were marginal in significance and relevance, and our focus in the next year or two will be to continue to increase our standards. As usual, I have given instructions to the associate editors to only accept papers that are highly likely to be downloaded, read, and cited.

Table 2 gives a little more detail in the breakout of regular papers and special section papers. As you can see, the number of regular papers both received and published declined a little. However, the number of special section papers received are up, and the number of special section papers published continues to grow. I do not expect this trend to change. I am working with the senior and associate editors to recruit interesting and timely special section topics and guest editors.

The outcomes of the paper review and acceptance process is provided in Table 3. Our acceptance rate is down a little and, as I stated, I will continue to put pressure on the associate editors to increase our acceptance standards. They have all been empowered to reject papers in their area without review if they feel the paper is not significant. We still publish too many papers that are, in my opinion, "So what?" papers, and in my predecessor's language are "not wrong" papers. These are papers that are technically correct, but do not contribute significant new information to our constituency. In *OE*

Table 1 Major statistics for 2007–2013 and percentage changes from 2012.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2013 vs. 2012
Number of journal pages	3966	3506	2842	3210	4678	5560	5388	–3.1%
Number of technical pages	3864	3410	2771	3097	4548	5422	5244	–3.3%
Number of papers published	515	442	360	405	587	681	659	–3.2%

Table 2 Regular versus special section papers, received and published, for 2007–2013 (including *OE Letters*).

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Regular papers received	879	937	939	939	1335	1489	1414
Regular papers published	500	442	360	366	516	559	525
Special section papers received	1	0	0	95	145	174	227
Special section papers published	15	0	0	39	71	122	134

Table 3 Outcomes of regular papers acted on from 2010 through 2013 (*OE Letters* not included).

	2010		2011		2012		2013	
Accepted	375	46.1%	507	42.0%	488	34.3%	467	34.1%
Declined/Closed	429	52.7%	692	57.2%	920	64.7%	896	65.4%
Withdrawn	10	1.2%	10	0.8%	14	1.0%	8	0.6%
Total	**814**	**100%**	**1209**	**100%**	**1422**	**100%**	**1371**	**100%**

Table 4 Journal performance.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Average time to complete initial review (months)							
Regular papers	2.0	1.9	1.7	2.2	1.5	1.1	1.0
OE Letters	1.0	0.8	0.8	1.7	1.1	0.6	0.6
Average time from acceptance to publication (months)							
Regular papers	6.1	3.3	2.0	2.0	1.7	1.6	1.0
OE Letters	2.8	2.1	1.7	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.0

Table 5 Number of papers published by region of first author in 2007–2013.

Region	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	% of Total
Africa	5	4	2	1	6	10	9	1.4%
Asia	280	255	211	230	374	413	379	57.5%
Australia	5	4	6	1	2	1	2	0.3%
Eastern Europe	14	8	11	9	12	16	39	5.9%
Middle East	7	10	12	11	17	15	9	1.4%
North America	131	106	76	98	89	147	135	20.5%
South/Cent. America	4	5	9	1	0	2	4	0.6%
Western Europe	69	50	33	54	87	77	82	12.4%
Totals	**515**	**442**	**360**	**405**	**587**	**681**	**659**	**100%**

Letters, we are doing well with a 29% acceptance rate and only 23 papers accepted. These are papers that I think should be very important and timely, so the significance criteria is raised.

We reached a real breakthrough this year in review time and publication time (Table 4). These are numbers that are all important to our authors. The average time to complete the initial review and make an initial decision has come down to 1 month. This breakthrough is due to the hard work of the *Optical Engineering* staff and the associate editors. Once a decision has been made, the average time from acceptance to publication has also come down significantly, from 1.6 months to 1.0 months. This is truly an achievement and entirely due to our unbelievable *Optical*

Engineering staff. We could not have asked for more, and I continue to be amazed by their accomplishments.

Table 5 shows the papers published by region in the world. There is nothing really that surprising from this table. The Asian science and technology renaissance (led by China) continues to be healthy and dominates the papers submitted and accepted. I do believe that the quality of these papers continues to improve. We were challenged to maintain high standards with the sort of volume we received early in the explosive growth period, but I believe we are managing the process better, and the journal will continue to improve and welcomes high-quality papers from Asia. I am also encouraged by the increase in paper count from Eastern Europe. It would be nice to see growth in South/Central America and Africa.

I usually cover the changes in the editorial board in the yearly review. However, this year, we now have over 50 senior and associate editors. We have added quite a number of associate editors and, so far, all of them have been doing a superb job at managing paper reviews and making good decisions. I do want to say "welcome" to all of the new associate editors and "thank you" to the associate editors that are stepping down. We (myself; John Greivenkamp, chair of the SPIE Publications Committee; the *Optical Engineering* staff; and the *Optical Engineering* constituency) are indebted to you for your hard work. And, as always, I would like to thank the SPIE journals staff for their incredible support. They are primarily responsible for making *Optical Engineering* a great journal.

Ronald G. Driggers
Editor