

Letter From the Editor

The ASME JOURNAL OF HEAT TRANSFER, along with all major journals, is facing a future of uncertainty. How will publication be done in a world of open electronic communication? Will archival journals survive when immediate dissemination of research results can be carried out through web-based publication? Have the technical journals become relics? Will CDs become the media of choice for future journal publication?

No one can answer these and similar questions with certainty. The ASME JOURNAL OF HEAT TRANSFER continues to see, and will continue to see, its mission as providing an archival source of carefully reviewed technical information on research and applications in the field of heat transfer. To maintain this role we will continue to seek reviewers who will provide timely, careful, and frank reviews of work submitted to the journal. We will always have some delay between submission and publication of papers considered by the journal; this is the inevitable price that the community pays to insure that work that is published has passed careful scrutiny. Because I believe that the heat transfer community prizes care and diligence over immediacy, I believe that unreviewed web-based publication will not compete with archival journals in the long run.

We have, however, considered many avenues to speed transfer of information that is of interest to our readers. For example, the journal web page <http://hawkeye.me.utexas.edu:80/~heatran> now publishes the table of contents for upcoming issues as soon as they are prepared. This is usually about two months before the hard copy issue is mailed. If copyright problems and other details can be worked out, we will also publish abstracts of upcoming papers as they are accepted.

The integrity and viability of any archival journal is based on the competence and care of its reviewers. The heat transfer community is broad and deep, and most reviewers respond to requests for a review with a good deal of care. I would like to thank all of those who have reviewed for us over the period of the journal's existence. The reviewers for 1996 are listed elsewhere in this issue, as are last year's winners of the Outstanding Reviewer award, chosen by the associate editors of the journal based on the quality and frequency of their reviews.

Despite the good response by most reviewers, journal associate editors continue to note that the most difficult aspect of their job is obtaining timely and complete reviews. We recognize that reviews of technical papers are time consuming. The journal staff tracks the number of papers sent to individual reviewers, and this information is sent to the associate editors so that individual reviewers are not overloaded. However, some reviewers respond only after repeated requests by the associate editors, or do not respond at all. This may greatly delay publication, frustrating authors and associate editors (and yours truly). If you are requested to review a paper and find that it is outside of your area or you cannot review it in a timely way, then it would speed the process if you will simply return the review package to the associate editor at once so that another reviewer can be assigned.

Some authors of journal papers do not respond at all to requests for reviews of papers submitted to the journal by others. We require three complete reviews for every paper submitted to the journal, and so to maintain a viable review process, a journal author can expect to receive an average of three requests for review for each paper that you submit (whether to JHT or other archival journals). This should be viewed as a minimum commitment to the heat transfer community, which has provided this level of review to previously submitted papers. By not honoring this commitment, a heavier burden is placed on colleagues and the review process is degraded.

Again, I want to thank all of those who have contributed to the ongoing success of the ASME JOURNAL OF HEAT TRANSFER through submission and review of quality archival papers.

Jack Howell, Technical Editor