

# Conference on Scientific Editorial Problems

With the assistance and encouragement of R. L. Taylor, of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and Donald H. Hale, Colonel, U.S. Army Chemical Corps, the first Conference on Scientific Editorial Problems was organized for the 1952 AAAS meeting in St. Louis. The purpose of the conference was to bring before the Association some of the important problems that confront those who prepare scientific manuscripts, who are concerned with the preparation of technical reports, or who edit and produce scientific publications.

The first conference was attended by 75 persons representing many phases of scientific writing, editing, and publishing. Speakers included A. J. Riker, "Standardization of literature citations"; J. Cattell, "Offset lithography"; Gertrude Mary Cox, "Role of statistics in technical reports"; L. E. Neville, "Problems of documentation in the Department of Defense"; G. Seielstad, "Format of technical reports"; A. E. Tyler, "Technical reporting in a Naval Research and Development establishment." At the 1952 session, it was decided to make the conference a permanent part of the AAAS meeting. The chairman appointed a steering committee consisting of the six speakers and Jonathan N. Leonard.

At the second conference in Boston, Dec. 27, 1953, attendance increased to 200 persons. Papers were presented by W. A. Noyes, Jr., M. O. Lee, G. S. Tulloch, Ruth C. Christman, R. M. Hewitt, J. D. Elder, R. B. Smith, and R. R. Shaw. (The papers are printed in this section.)

Multiple sessions are being planned for the 1954

conference to be held at the AAAS meeting in Berkeley this December. Members of the 1954 steering committee are: J. D. Elder, Harvard University Press; R. D. Hemens, University of Chicago Press; R. M. Hewitt, The Mayo Clinic; M. O. Lee, *American Journal of Physiology*; J. N. Leonard, *Time Magazine*; L. E. Neville, Armed Services Technical Information Agency; A. J. Riker, University of Wisconsin; G. Seielstad, The Johns Hopkins University; A. E. Tyler, U.S. Naval Ordnance Test Station.

The Conference on Scientific Editorial Problems invites the participation of all interested persons and groups. The 1954 sessions will include speakers on a wide variety of editorial subjects, and group discussions will also be scheduled. Programming is designed to examine questions and problems of interest to the greatest number of participants. Inquiries and suggestions will be welcomed. Correspondence should be directed to any member of the steering committee or to the conference chairman.

In these days of accelerated and expanded research by universities, industry, and government, and increasingly large numbers of scientific papers and technical reports, publication problems merit serious consideration. There is considerable need to standardize—certainly to discuss—techniques involved in effective technical writing and publishing.

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Conference Chairman

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## Probable Trends in Scientific Publications as Viewed from the Editor's Office

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When one talks about trends, one talks about one's own journal; therefore, what I have to say may not be representative of science as a whole. The problems of the editor today are not entirely financial; they arise to some extent merely from the bulk of the things he has to handle.

The *Journal of the American Chemical Society* today publishes something over 5 times the number of words it published in 1920 and about 2.6 times the number of words it published in 1940. During the 4 brief years that I have been editor, the size of the journal has increased from 4100 pages to 6500 pages; we also print 10 percent more words per page. I can say only that, if this trend continues, a new editor will be needed before very long. The increase, incidentally, is not peculiar to our journal; the *Physical Review* and

the *Journal of Chemical Physics* have increased almost exactly in the same ratio.

I have several thoughts about the kinds of manuscripts we receive today. In the first place, there is more fragmentary publication. I suppose that, as the number of chemists and scientists increases, the competitive spirit is bound to become of greater and greater importance. We find authors feeling that they must have rapid publication. They do not wish to wait for posthumous publication. Since presidents of universities base promotions not on the quality of the work but on the avoidrupois of the reprints, it behooves scientists to get out many small articles rather than one big one.

The editors also have been responsible to some extent for this trend, because, with the increase in receipts, it has been necessary to reduce articles to what some people facetiously call the telegraphic style. Unnecessary words have to be omitted; we have to eliminate graphs and tables as far as we possibly can. Consequently, one finds authors who say, "Frankly, I made this paper twice as long as I knew you would accept, because it gives me some leeway when you ask