

EDITORIAL

After seven years of a stimulating stewardship, the guidance of the *Johns Hopkins APL Technical Digest* is being transferred to my colleague, John R. Apel (currently Chief Scientist, Milton S. Eisenhower Research Center). He will assume the role of Editor-in-Chief and Chairman of the Editorial Board on January 1, 1987, and will become fully responsible for the contents of this journal beginning with the third issue of 1987.

It is worthwhile to restate the functions of an in-house journal such as this, restricted to contributions from current and former APL staff members or their close associates on topics related to the technical tasks or broader concerns of the Laboratory.

When documenting new discoveries or describing new results, the professional journals must, by necessity, be given priority for publication since they alone command the readership that provides maximum exposure to colleagues. These traditional archival functions and communication networks are well established.

However, when a number of contributors with quite different technical backgrounds collaborate on a complex development with wide-ranging results, professional journals are sometimes hard-pressed to be the optimal publication repository. Special theme issues or proceedings of conferences can, in some instances, be published. But more often, results have to be dispersed in several journals, each with a restricted field of interest, and the impact of a unified presentation is lost. In-house journals can be of value by publishing such material. Similar arguments can be made for articles that review progress over a span of time in specific areas of science or technology, especially when presented in a way that attracts the interest of nonspecialists. Such reviews can perform a valuable function by transmitting insights from one field to another.

This journal is not solely archival (as are the well-established in-house publications of AT&T Bell Laboratories, IBM, Xerox, and of U.S. government agencies such as the National Bureau of Standards). Nor is it primarily designed to provide informal accounts of technical projects, as is done well by publications of several of the national laboratories of the Department of Energy (foremost among them *Los Alamos Science*). Rather, it charts a course that combines technical reporting (such as the soon-to-be-published proceedings of a symposium on "Measuring Ocean Waves from Space," the first results from the GEOSAT and POLAR BEAR satellite missions, and reviews typified by several articles in this issue) with contributions on topics related to other less technical aspects of APL.

The inclusion of articles about the broader interests of the Laboratory provides insights into the goals, motivations, and objectives of its staff. Personal observations and recollections, historical experiences, and the opinions of people who are responsible for continued creativity are given center-stage attention.

These two types of inputs have been the key ingredients of this journal. They respond to the publishing needs of a large R&D establishment (APL) that is an integral part of a research university (The Johns Hopkins University). While care is required not to impose an additional burden on the already enormously complex publication network or to saddle contributors with writing tasks of marginal value, this journal is, I believe, worthy of support as a resource in an arena where unique informational needs are to be met. I wish the new Editor well.

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