



1995 in Review: Part II

This editorial continues a review of the 1995 year for your journal *Optical Engineering*—the now completed Volume 34. Please read these comments and statistics in conjunction with the February 1996 editorial.

In Volume 34 (1995) we published 3427 technical pages, a downturn from Volume 33. Figure 1 shows the number of technical pages published per year since 1977. I did state in my editorial of March 1995 that “we do not project this [1993–94] rate of increase to continue for 1995, but rather expect a flattening of the curve.” That prediction would have been right on the mark except that during the last quarter we had to reduce the page count and hence the number of papers published. This was a budget issue as we tried to deal with escalating costs, particularly of paper. Thus the downturn was not a function of the papers received and accepted. As a result of this downturn, we have slipped a little in our time interval between acceptance and publication. The plan for 1996 is to catch up that time delay and be back to a time interval of approximately five months.

Figure 2 presents the number of papers published per year since 1972 and also shows the balance between regularly contributed papers and those submitted for special sections. The role of special section papers in our publishing program is illustrated in Fig. 3. The percentage of special section papers published in Volume 34 was 44.7, in the same range as previous years. It should be noted that I talk about special sections, and not about special issues. As a policy, we do not devote entire issues to a specific topic so that we can continue on a monthly basis to publish regular papers that cover the wide spectrum of optical science and engineering.

Table 1 provides information on the outcome of regular papers received for each year from 1991 to 1994 (1995 papers received in the later part of the year are still in process, of course). Some fraction of the papers submitted in 1994 were processed and published in 1995. Of the papers submitted during 1994, 60% were accepted—about the same as the previous year. The initial acceptance ratio is much lower than this, but many papers are either accepted after revision or accepted after resubmission and re-review. The percentage rejected was up

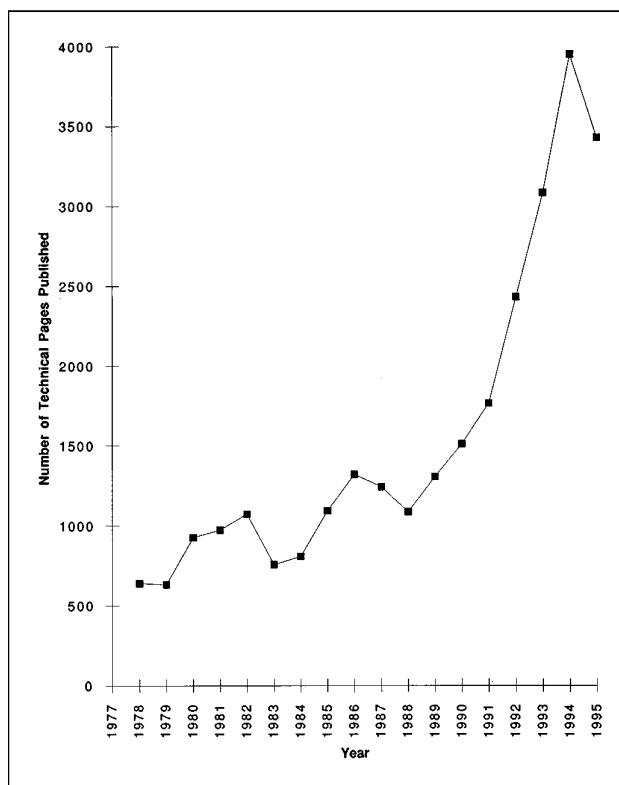


Fig. 1 Number of technical pages published per year since 1977.

slightly. The term “closed” needs explanation. Some papers that are returned to authors for revision and resubmission do not get resubmitted. After a reasonable interval and a couple of reminder letters, I close the file. Other authors will tell me that they will not resubmit, and those files are also closed.

Table 2 captures the activity of the Rochester editorial office and compares it with 1994 and 1993. The heart of the work is the review process. As your editor I am fortunate to have excellent support from a large number of colleagues who accept the responsibility to do the demanding work that is necessary. I can assure those reviewers that the authors are very appreciative of the detailed reviews, especially when they are constructively

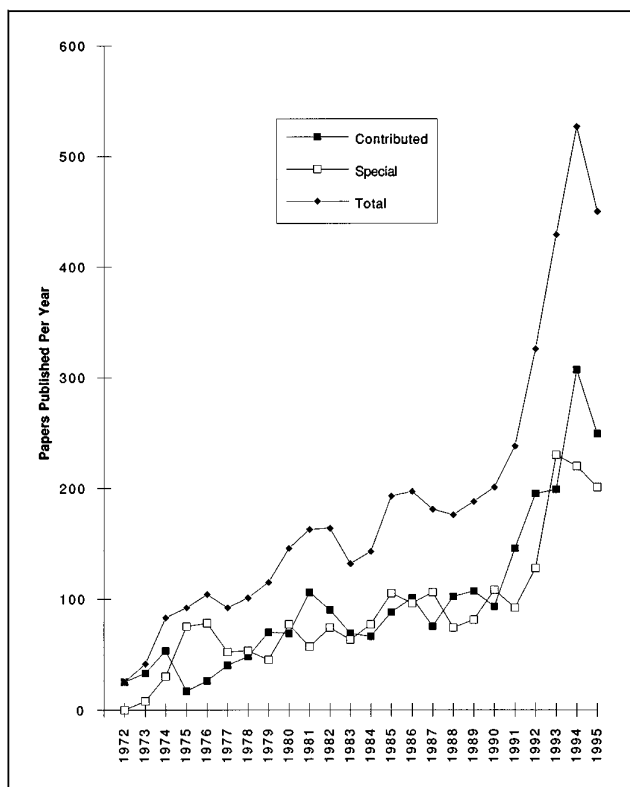


Fig. 2 Total number of papers published per year since 1972.

Table 1 Outcome of papers received from 1991 to 1994.

	1991	1992	1993	1994
% accepted	64.0	69.8	59.4	60.0
% rejected	26.4	21.5	24.1	27.5
% closed	7.0	5.8	12.3	7.9
% withdrawn	1.3	2.6	1.7	3.1
% transferred	1.3	0.3	2.5	1.5

Table 2 Activity of the Rochester editorial office during 1995.

		'94-'95	'93-'95
		% change	% change
Regular papers received	436	-4.2	+8.7
Reviewers selected	1166	-4.3	+11.4
Written reviews received	711	-5.1	-2.2
Revised manuscripts received	249	-7.4	-3.1
Accepted	276	+3.0	+5.7
Rejected	105	-26.6	+5.0
Withdrawn	3		
Closed	39	-30.4	-26.4
Returned to authors for revision	295	-0.3	-0.3
Papers received and accepted for special sections	228	-9.5	+15.2
Items received for Communications section	18	0	

critical—as most are. I can't begin to count how many times authors specifically express their thanks and often say how much their paper has been improved by the reviewers' comments.

Figure 4 gives an overview of the papers received and is a plot of the cumulative number of papers received by month for each of the last seven years. The data for the chart are the regularly submitted papers and hence special papers are not included. The total of the special papers received and accepted for the year is included in Table 2.

It is also worth reporting to you the “work in progress” by looking at the status of papers received during 1995 as of December 31, 1995 (see Table 3). Clearly those papers that arrived on the last business day, Saturday, December 30, have not moved along very far by the end of the year! As of the end of the year, 67% of the

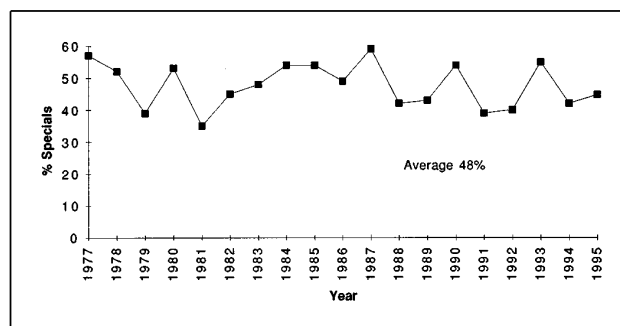


Fig. 3 Percentage of special papers published per year.

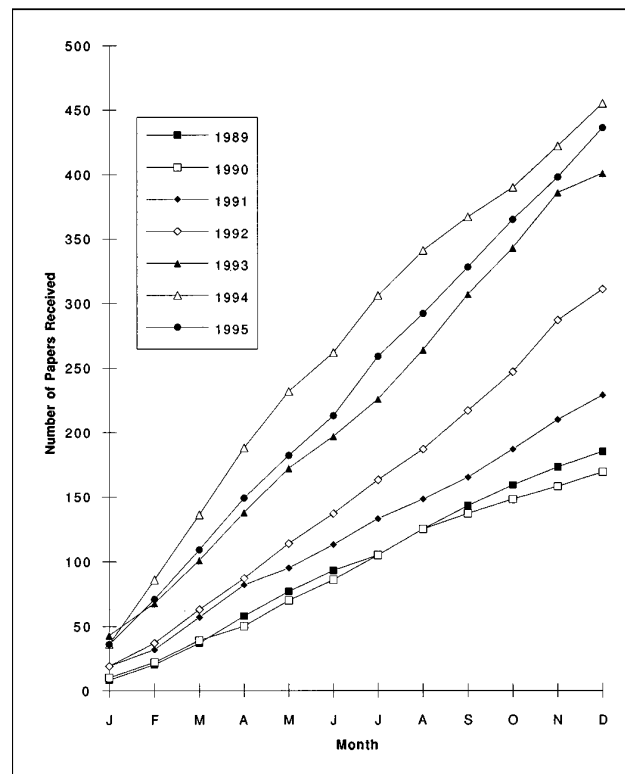


Fig. 4 Number of papers received by month from 1989 to 1995 (excluding specials).

Table 3 Status of papers received during 1995 as of December 31, 1995 (excluding specials).

	Papers	%
Published	28	6.4
In press	158	36.2
Rejected	78	17.9
In review	89	20.5
In revision	55	12.6
Withdrawn	3	0.7
Closed	21	4.8
Transferred	4	0.9
	<u>436</u>	

papers submitted during the year have completed the cycle through my editorial office; that is, they have been accepted and published, accepted, rejected, withdrawn, closed, or transferred. While I have completed my work on these papers, 158 or approximately 36% of papers submitted are with our journal team in Bellingham and are, in the vernacular, “in press.” Thus 33% of the papers submitted are currently being reviewed or are back to the authors for revision.

As you read this in March of 1996, many of the “in press” papers referred to here will have been published. Indeed, Volume 35 is already under way; so, happy and productive reading for 1996.

Editor’s Anecdote

I solicited one of our colleagues to review a paper for *Optical Engineering*. My letter to the potential reviewer was dated 21 March 1994. I received a response on 19 December 1995—not with a review, but with a letter written on 15 December 1995 saying:

Dear Dr. Thompson:

I just received the enclosed letter asking me to referee a paper. Unfortunately, due to the age of the request, I expect the opportunity to review it has long passed. Many groups at _____ often move yearly. Some folks joke that at least one group is always moving—because we don’t have room for all of them!

Please note my home address, and please consider me as a referee for future papers.

Brian J. Thompson
Editor