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A NEW EDITOR

My transition to retirement was side-tracked by SWST in accepting my bid to become editor of *Wood and Fiber Science* last October. As Geza Ifju pointed out in his January editorial, it's humbling to follow in the steps of the many very able former editors. Just as I am going through a professional transition, so is WFS in entering the electronic age. More recent authors and reviewers have noticed that we are now operating in a web-based submission and review system with Editorial Manager, the same system as used by *Holzforschung*, and over 2000 other journals. We also now run all manuscripts through a computerized editing/formatting program of our publisher, Sheridan Press, to reduce editing time, and more importantly, to gain greater consistency in our articles. In time, we will essentially operate electronically, which will reduce our time to publication. We have also made some formatting changes, beginning with the current issue.

One rather delightful experience as editor is re-making acquaintances with old friends in the process of "encouraging" reviews. Since starting as editor, I've made contact with about 100 reviewers, and close to 95% have been very positive in their response, even though I know it can be a bit of a burden for some. Since all reviewers have also been authors, they are aware of the importance of identifying additions or corrections that can greatly improve papers. I've yet to find an author who didn't appreciate constructive comments from reviewers.

When I came on as editor, it was with certain goals: reduce the time to publication, increase the international standing of the journal, publish

more state-of-the-art papers, and get intimately involved in the technical editing process of every manuscript. All of these goals should contribute toward increasing our "Impact Factor," the measure of citations of articles commonly used to determine the standing of journals. For 2006, our two major competitors, *Holzforschung* and *Wood Science and Technology*, had IF of 1.014 and 0.74, respectively; ours was 0.54 (higher is better). Time to publication for 2007 was 14 for *Wood and Fiber Science* and about 6 for the other two. We have a long way to go to improve our standing against two journals that have the advantage of no page charges in attracting manuscripts.

And now a glimpse of what's in the works. We are looking at reinstituting an earlier practice—that of publishing titles of theses and dissertations. Quite often, these publications go undiscovered or take years to surface. Another area that has run hot and cold is book reviews. We owe it to the SWST membership to critically review new books. However, we depend on the membership to bring them to our attention. As we go to press, we have a new (or perhaps re-warmed) effort in state-of-the-art papers, which are now labeled "future-of-the-art." The purpose is to give our readers not simply a review of the literature, but to provide a vision of where a particular technology or material is heading, what the critical issues are, and the likely impact on wood (or wood science).

Finally, I feel very honored to serve as your editor and will do my best to make *Wood and Fiber Science* the leading journal in the field.

FRANK BEALL