



Authors, Members, and Readers

As you read this editorial, there are a number of truisms that are worth noting:

- All authors are not *members*.
- All *members* are not authors.
- All readers are not *members*.
- All readers are not authors.
- All *members* are readers.

I have stressed the word *member* here because as a long-time supporter of SPIE, I would like to make some comments about membership in SPIE—The International Society for Optical Engineering—membership in general and its relationship to *Optical Engineering* in particular.

Let me start with some information about *Optical Engineering* and the involvement of members of our society. Please remember that the journal *Optical Engineering* is a real benefit of being a member. The members support the journal with their dues and hence in a meaningful and deliberate way support the other readers of *Optical Engineering* who do not subscribe to the journal.

Over the last few years I have collected data on the authorship of the papers that we have published in *Optical Engineering* (see my various editorials¹). Another part of that data is shown in Table 1, which gives information on the percentage of papers published each year that have at least one author who is a member. The table also shows the percentage of all authors who are members—regular and fellows.

Table 1 shows a declining, but nevertheless healthy, percentage in both categories. This is understandable as we reach out to a wider international authorship, and due to the fact that for some of our international colleagues it is very difficult to pay the membership dues because of the restrictions on the availability of hard or local currency.

Table 1 Member involvement as authors.

Year	% papers with at least one author/member	% of all authors who are members
1991	66.0	33.0
1992	57.2	29.6
1993	53.4	24.5
1994 ^a	49.3	20.4

^a Year to date through September issue.

Membership As a Responsibility

For many of us it becomes a professional responsibility to become a member of professional societies in our discipline. Thus I personally² have five such memberships including SPIE—The International Society for Optical Engineering (since 1964). The professional societies in science and engineering are learned societies that promote the discipline by scholarly publication and meetings. Some of them by tradition are member-driven, societies that are "by, with, and for" the members. That is certainly appropriate. Nearly all societies have some form of outreach to the rest of the technical and business community and welcome nonmembers to their society activities. On a personal note, I became involved with SPIE because I sensed a mission that focused much more on the outreach and the transfer of technology to users who may be in a wide variety of disciplines and whose center of gravity was not located necessarily in optical sciences and engineering.

Members of SPIE attempt to examine, explain, and use optical science or they invent, develop, and implement new

technologies. That statement perhaps describes the essence of optical engineering and is a philosophical guide to the work of our society including its publication program, which includes your journal *Optical Engineering*.

I suppose that by talking about the topic of authorship, membership, and readership I am making a pitch for membership—I hope that you, the reader, do not find that inappropriate.

Postscript

Naturally I would like to reach the utopian dream of all authors and readers being members. But until that time I urge anyone to submit their work for review and possible publication in

Optical Engineering—I assure you the editorial process has no biases. The editors and the members solicit as wide a readership as possible for the informative and authoritative material published in *Optical Engineering*.

Brian J. Thompson
Editor

¹*Optical Engineering* Vol. 31(2), 197-198; 31(3), 397-398; 32(1), 5-6; 32(2), 213-214; 33(2), 325-326; 33(3), 669-670.

²I do mean personally, i.e., I pay the membership dues and journal subscriptions.

The Value of Membership

As SPIE gets ready to celebrate its 40th anniversary in 1995, the board of directors has made a commitment to make SPIE the "member society of choice" for people in the optics community. This commitment includes enhancing existing membership benefits for current members and making those benefits known to potential new members.

Benefits of SPIE Membership

Joining SPIE as a regular member provides you with many benefits including:

- Opportunity to stay informed
- Peer recognition and professional growth
- Association, communication, and networking with colleagues
- Continuing education
- Participation in and contribution to technical community
- Subscription to *Optical Engineering*, SPIE's monthly journal
- Subscription to *OE Reports*, SPIE's monthly newspaper
- Exploration of emerging applications and technologies
- Special member rates

The board's commitment has led to the establishment of a membership committee, chaired by Robert Freiberg. This committee met for the first time at the San Diego annual meeting last July and is tasked with promoting the interests of SPIE members and addressing their needs. If you have suggestions or comments about what SPIE can do to enhance your membership, or if you are interested in joining, please contact Randy Bilof at SPIE, 206/676-3290, or send an e-mail message to membership@spie.org.

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