

Publication Charges and Financial Solvency



The author has displayed an interest in publishing programs at the American Institute of Physics for at least 23 years inasmuch as his first AIP-published paper appeared in a 1945 issue of *The Physical Review*. As AIP director he is directly and actively involved in both publishing and information-retrieval activities.

Financial contributions to the cost of publishing research results have provided support for physics research journals for 38 years. The contributions, which the authors' institutions are expected to pay as an essential cost of doing research, are made through the mechanism of a publication charge per page, called a "page charge." The use of page charges in *The Physical Review* was started by the American Physical Society in 1930 and, in 1931, was applied to all the journals published by the American Institute of Physics.

The journals of AIP and its member societies are threatened by a serious decrease in income from page charges. The decrease could result from financial squeezes throughout our country and from a lack of understanding and acceptance of the page-charge concept by officials who determine the fiscal policies of research institutions. If our successful publishing philosophies are to be continued and the financial solvency of the physics journals and the societies that publish them is to be maintained, physicists must rally to the support of the page-charge concept.

Page-charge payments to AIP and its societies are a contribution to the advancement of the discipline of physics and are intended to be measured by the input costs of preparing an article for printing. Subscription income of the journals is supposed to equal the output costs, which include printing and distribution as well as the shortages due to nonpayment of page

charges in hardship cases. Under present procedures in our physics journals, at the time of receipt of the galley proofs the author is requested to obtain the certification of an authorized agent of his institution that the page charges for his article will be paid. It is clearly stated in the request that the payment of page charges is expected, but an institution that is unable to pay may state the reasons for refusal without affecting the publication of the article in question. The decision to accept an article for publication has been and should be based on scientific grounds, not on financial grounds.

The Federal Council for Science and Technology took action in 1961 that endorsed the budgeting and payment of page charges by federal agencies and by federal research grantees and contractors. The action resulted from the pioneering successes of the concept in physics and other journals and from the acceptance of the philosophy that research is not completed until published. The federal guidelines recognized that costs of publication of research results are just as important to the sponsor as salaries, equipment and other operating expenses required for the performance of the research. The guidelines also recognized that the publication of research results in primary journals of nonprofit organizations is an efficient and effective way of disseminating research results widely.

Academic and industrial institutions have joined the federal agencies and laboratories in their support and pay-

ment of page charges. Consequently, the payment by US institutions whose authors have published in our journals has been characteristically good. The journals of AIP and its member societies collected a total of \$2.5 million in page charges during calendar year 1967. For the largest journal, *The Physical Review*, published by AIP for the American Physical Society, page charges were honored for all but 14% of the pages published in 1967.

Separation of the input from the output production costs of a journal by means of the page charge has permitted AIP and its member societies to adjust independently the amounts of the page charges to the input costs and of the subscription prices to the output costs. Page charges for our journals vary from \$25 to \$60 per page. Subscription prices are based on the specific output costs of the journals. The high percentage payment of page charges has permitted our subscription prices to be kept low enough for most physicists to receive their own personal copies of those journals that provide essential information to them. The subscription prices of journals published by commercial publishers without page charges, as in the case of many journals in Germany and in England, range up to ten times as much per thousand words, and the number of subscribers is correspondingly small.

As new information formats are developed on the basis of the information content in journal articles, sep-

arate subscription prices can be established for such services to subscribers as microforms, computer tapes and selective dissemination of articles without affecting the basic page charges. The page-charge mechanism has been important in the past to the financial solvency of AIP and its societies publishing journals and will be increasingly important in the future as new information services are developed. Therefore, AIP is convinced of the importance and value of page charges and is committed to their continuation.

Unfortunately the agents of authors' institutions who authorize the payment of page charges are often removed from research activities and the financial problems of scientific societies that publish research results. Lately, in the wake of cuts in federal funding of research, some of them are refusing to pay page charges or are establishing institutional policies that disallow payment. If this trend grows, AIP and its member societies may have to reject articles on financial grounds, to avoid very serious deficits, by making the payment of page charges mandatory. The adoption of a mandatory page charge by the AIP Governing Board is one of several alternative actions now under consideration in the event that the financial picture worsens.

For the present, no basic changes in policy will be implemented. However, a procedural change in the handling of manuscripts will become effective after 1 Jan. 1969 for AIP-owned jour-

nals. Moreover all of the editors of member-society journals have agreed to cooperate in making the same procedural change. The change will include a request for certification of the payment of the page charges upon notification of acceptance by the editor of the manuscript for publication. The certification of payment or non-payment will be required before the processing of the manuscript for publication begins, but unless some further action becomes essential because of increased financial pressures, the processing will not be affected by whether or not a payment is indicated. In addition a request for a purchase order to cover the page charges and reprint costs will be initiated at earlier stages in the publication process than heretofore. The early indication of the funds available to AIP from page-charge payments will make possible the establishment of realistic page budgets and continuous control of our financial condition.

The physics community has demonstrated its support of the sound principles of page charges. We call on physicists to rally in continued support by convincing authorized agents and other officials that the obligation to pay page charges must be accepted. If this continued support is forthcoming, we can still retain the present philosophies of page charges and of publishing without introducing restrictive measures.

—H. William Koch