

Transactions or Magazine or Newsletter – some reflections

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Many journals now include promotional encouragement for authors to submit material to them with phrases like "...become a published author ...". This is obviously aimed at early career researchers such as post-docs and even doctoral students.

Looking at recent examples of accepted and published material, readers may be confused in comparing the CAS Magazine and the various CAS Transactions. One may suspect that there has been some uncertainty and doubts over the best place to submit research results, complicated by the long lead-times between submission and acceptance and between acceptance and actual publication.

The "pressure to publish" is unrelenting and, if anything, seems to be increasing for many people, despite the increase in the number of journals available.

Moreover, many technical colleges, community colleges, etc., have been re-named as 'universities', and with that has come mission-change, and a wish to become recognised as research-universities, and so pressuring their faculty to publish the kinds of papers which they associate with such recognition.

This process can have unexpected consequences: the 'Piltdown man' fraud which was carried out in 1912 was not recognised as a deliberate fake until 1949 [1].

More recently, in 1989, the 'cold fusion' claims from the work of Fleischmann and Pons spread as a result of the University of Utah management believing that it would bring fame to the University of Utah and led to priority in publicity over peer-reviewed respected journals [2].

It is clear that the Transactions deal with specialised topics and are the proper place for advanced and novel research publications and (should have) access to reviewers who are experts in the field and can make good judgements about quality, novelty and suitability. With that comes risks, that among such

reviewers, there can be some who could behave unethically by delaying a publication on a topic close to their own, or even appropriating some of the ideas and claiming them personally. This has always been the case, and is perhaps an unavoidable aspect of human nature. Editors have a responsibility to look out for and try to eliminate this.

Now, what should be the role of the Magazine? It is the proper place for high-quality tutorial papers and papers providing an authoritative and accurate review of a particular topic. So, primarily it is to educate the readership, keep them updated across a range of advanced topics, and recognise those who have the not-so-common skills of being able to explain things in an understandable way and perhaps from novel viewpoints.

Many people may conclude that in recent years, the CAS Magazine has drifted away from this proper objective and has published long and advanced papers which were too specialised and not at all in a tutorial style for non-experts.

The Newsletter should be the place to publish 'news' – which means primarily material of interest to people in the CAS subject field. It is obvious that it should include announcements about and reports on a wide range of relevant conferences, worldwide to reflect IEEE's geographical coverage, and perhaps guidance in explaining work described only in non-English-language publications. It is also legitimate to include information about well-known personalities in the CAS field, including biographies, obituaries and so on.

[1] J.S. Weiner *et al* 'The solution of the Piltdown Problem', Bulletin of the British Museum (Natural History) Geology, Vol 2 No 3, 1953, pp 1139-146

[2] F. Close, 'Cold fusion I: the discovery that never was - At last, the bubble of cold fusion has burst, leaving behind a sticky story of intrigue, false facts and wrong inferences' New Scientist, 19 January 1991.