

**American Physical Society
Publications Oversight Committee
Report to the APS Council**



The POC and advisers during the Oct 17 Meeting at the Ridge Editorial Office

Members: C. Beusang (presiding), A. Demkov, K. Kirby, J. Koplik, D. Meyerhofer, G. Sprouse, S. Su

Advisors: P. Dlug, M. Doyle, C. Erdmann, C. Giaccone(not in picture), I. Gordon(not in picture), L. Longobardi, S. Maw (recording), J. Painter, H. Rozenfeld, J. Taylor.

The POC met two times in 2014, on Feb 10 at College Park, and again on Oct 17 in Ridge. The committee's May meeting was cancelled because of lack of a quorum planning to attend. Several of the committee members have not attended any meetings of the POC. After the cancellation of the May meeting, there was a renewed effort to engage the committee to get strategic advice on various issues. Below are summaries of the two meetings, which cover the main subjects addressed by the POC this year.

The Feb 10 meeting:

Members: C. Beausang (presiding) D. Meyerhofer (speaker phone), J. Serene, K. Kirby, A. Johnson, G. Sprouse, A. Demkov, S. Su, P. Capparello, J. Koplik

Advisors, Guests: P. Dlug, A. Halsted (recording), M. Doyle, C. Giaccone, D. Kulp, J. Taylor, B. Hicks, J. Painter, C. Erdmann, J. Kim-Zajonz, L. Miao, T. Shinbrot (speaker phone), M. Chesnek, L. Bullis

During the Feb 10 meeting, the most important job was to discuss the journal pricing proposed by the Treasurer/Publisher. Serene reported that publication expenses have been remarkably level since 2005, in spite of the great increase in the number of pages. Composition and production costs have dropped from ~\$7M in 2004 to ~\$3M in 2013, thanks to changes in vendors and their price reductions. Editorial expense necessarily scales with increase in submissions. Journal Information Systems costs have been fairly level, and increased efficiency and attrition in the support function of Journal Operations has controlled expense there as well. Expansion of the Ridge Editorial Office is paid for, although a depreciation of ~\$500K per year is now on the books. Serene noted that there were a number of tier reassignments in 2014, the first since the advent of tiered pricing in 1994.

Serene proposed spreading the increased price of our package, APS ALL, due to the addition of PRApplied, over two years, with 3% each year. Painter said that this would still be flagged for examination in most library budgets, in spite of the low price per article. After much discussion, Serene revised the proposal for journal subscription price increases, with smaller increases for tiers 1 and 2, and this was unanimously adopted.

The committee received a report from Physical Review Applied Managing Editor Julie Kim-Zajonz on the status of the new journal, and Editor Troy Shinbrot joined the meeting by speaker phone. The journal presents an opportunity to attract authors from new fields and for interdisciplinary work. Koplik asked about the relationship with the Journal of Applied Physics. Sprouse said that historically, AIP has published applied physics, but with its recent reorganization and splitting the publication operation into a separate and independent arm, APS is free to compete with AIP in ways it had agreed not to previously--and vice versa. The result could be a stronger JAP. Koplik questioned what looked to him to be a "turf war." Kirby said the relationship with AIP was cordial and that the advent of PR Applied did not surprise them when they learned of it. The field is burgeoning and clearly has room for this new journal. Beausang observed that the project had progressed at "warp speed."

Ling Miao, Managing Editor of Physical Review X, briefed the committee on PRX. Starting PRX was partly a business decision to be positioned in Open Access, but that did not particularly attract authors. The editorial decision at the outset, supported by potential authors and editorial board members, was to rigorously and consistently enforce high standards. Miao said that the journal now aims to be no less selective than PRL. Editorial judgment, literature searches, and discussion with board members are all used in the review process, and PRX board member Johnson warmly confirmed this. Miao said that the journal aimed at the intersection of high quality with gold open access, a niche not presently well occupied. Another jump in submissions is expected in summer of 2014 after the next impact

factor, which might eventually reach the mid-teens. Erdmann said that the journal fit with trends in other organizations and countries and was a good experiment.

A report on APS involvement in CHORUS and its current status was presented. The committee was also informed of various ongoing projects to improve the reader experience with full text html viewing, and responsive design of our web sites that allow viewing on phones, tablets, laptops and desktops, on the same basic web site. A taxonomy to classify content across all of APS, including meetings and publications, is under development.

The Oct 17 Meeting:

The committee was informed by staff of many current issues, including Corporate Reform. Kate Kirby described the process and its current status, with an emphasis on the future of the POC. As much as possible of current procedures will be carried over, and future changes will be made with further deliberation.

Assistant Editorial Director Hernan Rozenfeld presented an update on the status of PRX and the findings of the visiting committee that met at Ridge in July. The committee recommended that PRX should remain small (about 250 papers per year) and selective. An editorial by Sprouse, confirming PRX's role was subsequently published in all the journals. Beausang asked about the current PRX-PRL relationship in light of PRX's rapid growth and high impact factor—is it “friendly” or competitive? Rozenfeld responded that there is some work to be done to encourage cooperation. Painter asked about the recent increase in the APC from \$1500 to \$1700 for PRX. Sprouse noted the increase is the result of increased submissions and related expenses and is considerably lower than Nature Communication's APC (\$5200).

Mark Doyle gave an overview of the open data government directive. An OSTP memo directed agencies that provide more than \$100 million in research funding to establish public access plans for the resulting publications and the underlying data. To date, the Dept. of Energy is first agency to make their full plan public, although NSF, NIH, and other agencies already have some requirements in these areas. DOE requires researchers to create data management plans and encourages them to make the underlying research data of published work digitally accessible, “either by supplementary information to the published article or through other means.” APS provides subscription access to supplementary material (SM) for its published articles and about 50% of PRL articles have SM, but most is additional text with very little “data”. SM procedures are currently being re-examined by a working group, with the intention of improving the way it is collected, categorized, reviewed, and stored. APS is also working with several other groups on various open data initiatives and is looking at partnering with specific repositories and service providers to store and preserve researcher data. APS's part in this is to serve its members and authors by helping them to comply with open data requirements. There was general agreement that the requirements are confusing and it will be up to the individual agencies to address this. APS's primary concern is providing guidance and tools to authors aid them in making their data publicly accessible with long-term preservation taken into consideration.

Sprouse outlined his involvement with a Wellcome-Trust-supported initiative to develop a way to specify all individual author contributions to research papers. They plan to define the possible roles played by contributors so that each author can be credited for his/her contribution in the relevant role, e.g., conceptualization, testing, analysis. Sprouse asked for POC feedback on the usefulness of this approach. Responses from the POC

ranged from extremely negative (it would discourage collaboration—people would waste time fighting over who did what) to concerns over cost vs benefits (time spent trying to assign roles, how is this helpful to authors?) to uncertainty about why this is needed at all (what problem is this trying to solve, there are existing ways to do this via acknowledgments or footnotes, but generally it is not needed, and in some cases actively avoided since it causes conflict.) Sprouse indicated that the main motivation was to give credit where it is due (younger authors get overlooked, having recognition may help with funding, etc.). Some members felt that it may be motivated by administrative reasons rather than helping authors. Painter suggested that if we did adopt this, it should be optional and flexible. Sprouse will pass along this feedback and continue to track the initiative.

Sprouse reported that the Division of Fluid Dynamics (DFD) had recently asked APS to look into different options for DFD publication in APS's journals. Rozenfeld presented a review/comparison of Physics of Fluids, Journal of Fluid Mechanics, and PRE's fluids section. His analysis indicated that PRE does not have the same coverage or community reach of the other two. Koplik concurred with this and noted that in the fluids community PRL may actually be considered as a publishing venue before PRE. Sprouse and Kirby will continue to study the options and develop plans to present to the DFD Executive Committee in November.

Rozenfeld gave an overview of the current structure, scope, and content of PRB. The 2013 re-emphasis on applying publication criteria has resulted in a reduction of submissions and published papers and increased numbers of rejections without review. Sprouse noted that recent Visiting Committees on PRL and PRX have provided valuable input and he requested suggestions from the POC on questions to be put to a PRB visiting committee, suggestions for committee members (editorial board members cannot be nominated), and possible survey questions (suggestions can be emailed to Sprouse). Demkov suggested that DMP, FIAP, and DCMOP be involved in selecting the PRB visiting committee.

The POC received reports on PRL, Supplemental Material, improving News coverage of APS articles, Librarian comments, and on SCOAP3. The next meeting has been planned for early February in College Park, in time to have input on the journal pricing process.