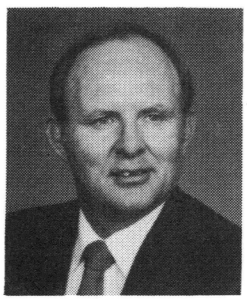

Editorial

Jack D. Gaskill, Editor

Are "Idea-Type" Papers a Good Idea? Reader Response

In my editorial in the November 1987 issue of *Optical Engineering,* I invited reader response to Joe Geary's recommendation that we accept "idea-type" papers for publication in the journal. An "idea-type" paper is, presumably, one that simply puts forth ideas without including any results or substantiated conclusions. I received a response from Bud VanderLugt, who is opposed to this idea, and I will attempt to paraphrase his remarks in the following paragraphs.

Bud stated his belief that it is trivial to come up with ideas and that the real issue is whether or not these ideas can "stand the test of analysis, deliberation, relationships to known concepts, experimental verification, etc., etc." He recalled that a former colleague would burst into his office with the "idea of the week" and suggested that such an individual would be tempted to submit a paper a week for publication if there were journals that would publish "idea-type" papers. Because a resume could be easily padded without expending much energy doing the hard part—the follow-up research—the temptation could be too difficult to resist.

Bud also stated that any one of the thousands of members of SPIE could generate more ideas than we could afford to have reviewed or printed, and he wondered how it would even be possible to review "idea papers" when the work is not complete. Finally, he indicated that he believes my task as Editor is to improve the quality of the articles and that "printing half-cooked ideas is not the way to do it."

In a way I am in the same position as was that individual who uttered the now famous saying (paraphrased), "some of my friends are for it and some of my friends are against, and I agree with my friends." I can definitely see some merit in Joe Geary's recommendation, because some people are better at coming up with ideas than they are at following up on those ideas, and vice versa. Consequently, if the product of the thinkers never gets conveyed to the doers, the ideas may never be followed up. On the other hand, I tend to agree more with Bud's thinking when it comes to publication in an archival journal. Not only might the quality of the journal be affected in a negative way, but the review process could turn into an absolute nightmare.

I welcome more reader response on this subject.

OPTICAL ENGINEERING EDITORIAL SCHEDULE

April 1988

Industrial Applications of Optical Signal Processing I

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May 1988

Industrial Applications of Optical Signal Processing II

Bahram Javidi
(See April 1988)

June 1988

Contributed papers on optical engineering

July 1988

Neural Networks

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August 1988

Photomechanics II

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September 1988

Multiple-Aperture Optical Systems

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October 1988

Computer-Aided Optical Design

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