

# COMMENTS



It has been some time since I have included an Editor's Comment in *Fusion Technology (FT)*. As they say, "No news is good news!" Things have been running fairly smoothly, thanks to the continuous fine support from the American Nuclear Society (ANS) staff, authors, reviewers, and readers. The key problem we still face, as do most technical journals, is a continued slow erosion of our library subscription base as a result of tight budgets worldwide. Thus, let me ask you again, as an interested reader of *FT*, to take a moment to check the library in your home institution to confirm that it is *still* receiving *FT* and intends to

keep doing so. If necessary, please put in a good word for *FT* with your librarian. If the situation warrants, don't hesitate to contact me, or the ANS staff, to arrange a discussion with your librarian. (Note: In addition to the voice and fax numbers listed on the *FT* organizational page, you can send messages to my e-mail address: [miley@uiucvmd.bitnet](mailto:miley@uiucvmd.bitnet).)

Two additional editorial issues—Technical Notes on Cold Fusion and "duplicate" publications—deserve comment. At the last *FT* Editorial Advisory Board meeting, board members recommended continuing cold fusion notes while ensuring that a high standard of review is maintained. When these notes started some four years ago, reviewers were instructed to consider the fact that cold fusion research was in its infancy, so speculation could be accepted, as long as the basic logic was sound. As the field has matured, however, it is now expected that speculative aspects should have substantial factual foundation. Consequently, reviewers of cold fusion notes are now instructed to use the same rigorous standards that apply to regular technical papers. In addition, a conscientious effort is made to include reviewers from outside the circle of cold fusion researchers.

The underlying question about including cold fusion notes in *FT* is whether or not this research can lead to a nuclear power source. If so, the notes are obviously appropriate for *FT*. If not, they should be in a different journal. Despite more than four years of research in this area, the answer to this question is still not clear!!! Until it is answered, *FT* policy is to continue the notes on the basis that they provide a unique channel for open communication of important and exciting research on fundamental aspects of fusion and solid-state physics and technology. *Fusion Technology* remains a primary vehicle for this important interchange since other journals have chosen to avoid the controversy of this subject. It remains my judgment that they have

made a mistake—the prime purpose of scientific journals is open interchange of new research.

The issue of duplication of papers came to my attention recently, when I received a three-page questionnaire on the topic from a group in the United Kingdom doing research on the proliferation of technical papers. They wanted to know how often we rejected papers because they were duplications or were minor extensions of prior publications. They also asked how I learned, as editor, of these duplications. Fortunately, this is not a common occurrence for *FT*, but it does happen more frequently than might be anticipated. I mainly rely on reviewers to detect problems, i.e., to point out that submitted manuscripts duplicate publications elsewhere or do not provide sufficient new material to justify a separate publication following earlier disclosure of the research in a conference proceedings or a journal paper. Indeed, in my judgment, reviewers have done an excellent job in this respect, and I do not feel this represents a problem for *FT*. However, both reviewers and authors frequently raise the question about duplication when the prior publication was in a proceedings or in a laboratory report. The decision in such cases rests on the basic question: How extensively distributed was the prior publication? If the distribution was wide (more than 100 copies) and if libraries were included, I believe this represents prior publication. In some cases, however, publications exceed these limits but are not as long and detailed as needed for a reviewed paper in *FT*. Publications of summaries in the *Transactions of the American Nuclear Society* or *Transactions of Fusion Technology* are good examples. In that case, a full-length paper can still be considered for *FT*. Indeed, the ANS policy for *Transactions* publications is that they do not preclude publication of full-length papers in a refereed ANS journal like *FT*. Thus, the decision is easy in those cases. There are, however, a number of other conference proceedings that are similar to the *Transactions*, i.e., that require only abstracts or extended summaries, where a clear policy has not been formulated. Those must be considered on a case-to-case basis. Potential authors who have questions about a proposed paper should contact me, one of the *FT* Associate Editors, or a member of the Editorial Advisory Board to discuss these issues.

In closing, I would note that Letters to the Editor received by *FT* to date have exclusively concerned scientific or technical issues raised by or about previous papers. However, letters about editorial policies, journal procedures, proceedings or transactions, and other nontechnical issues, are also eligible for publication in the Letters to the Editor section. This provides an excellent avenue for communicating views and raising questions within the fusion community about the journal. Thus, if this editorial, or previous ones, raise issues in your mind, I encourage you to contact us for informal discussion or, alternately, submit a Letter to the Editor for publication.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George Miley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "G" and "M".