Editorial: Thank a DAE!

Physical Review Letters, like all APS journals, is owned by our community. This has profound implications. Most importantly, this means that its mission, scope, and standards are ultimately defined by the community’s needs and desires, rather than by commercial considerations. This is achieved through a collaborative effort among authors, referees, readers, and the PRL editors. In the last year, we received in excess of 12,000 manuscripts and required the service of over 25,000 individual referees! These stunning—and unsustainable—numbers are one obvious reason behind the need to enforce our acceptance criteria more strongly and to turn down an increasing number of manuscripts without external review.

Central in maintaining and further improving the quality of PRL is its Editorial Board. Board Members are called “Divisional Associate Editors” because of their direct connection to the APS Divisions. Their roles both as leading researchers and as members of the editorial team give them a unique and priceless perspective. DAEs, who are selected from an international pool of scientists, are vetted both by an APS division and by the PRL editors. This combined expertise leads to the appointment of DAEs who both command great respect in their area of research and are highly effective in the peer review process. They provide their service on a completely voluntary basis, and do this with an extraordinary degree of professionalism. As we can all well imagine, it is never easy and takes great intellectual honesty to sign a negative report to a colleague or friend, who will most likely not be particularly thrilled to receive it!

We are enforcing our acceptance criteria more rigorously as well as increasing the number of rejections without external review, as mentioned in the editorial of October 29. Consequently, we will request informal opinions from our Editorial Board and others on borderline cases more frequently than in the past, or seek other informal advice during the review process of some papers. In practice, this means that the role and demands on the time and effort of the DAEs will become even more significant.

As we begin the New Year, my wish is therefore to ask all of you to join me in thanking our DAEs for all the work that they do on the behalf of our community. Make sure to also thank them in person the next time you see them. They really deserve it!

Pierre Meystre
Editor

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