January 1, 1996 will see several changes in policy for the publications of the American Physiological Society. The major change is the requirement that a submission form be completed and received with the manuscript before the paper will be sent out for review. We will also change the manner in which the "received" and "accepted in final form" dates are assigned to manuscripts. The Information for Authors will be revised to encompass these changes.

Currently we publish an article submission form in each issue of the journals. This voluntary form was designed primarily to obtain a proper statement of originality. The Publications Committee is in the process of revising this form extensively. The new mandatory form will also appear in every issue of the journals, will be available for downloading from the APS gopher server (gopher.uth.tmc.edu 3300), and will be sent out to authors currently publishing in the journals.

Several events have led to our decision to adopt a mandatory submission form. The statement of authorship responsibility has grown so that it now must cover several items. By signing the manuscript submission form an author attests that, to quote from the Information for Authors, "the research is original and will not be submitted elsewhere until a decision has been made as to its acceptability by the APS journal." It also means that the author "has made an important scientific contribution to the study and is thoroughly familiar with the primary data" and that he/she "has read the complete manuscript, takes responsibility for its content, and understands that if it or a part of it is found to be faulty or fraudulent, all authors share responsibility." Obtaining letters from authors adequately addressing these issues is becoming more difficult. At its meeting this past March the Publications Committee accepted the recommendation from the Public Affairs Committee that all authors be required to sign a statement of responsibility. The revised submission form will be designed to accommodate this requirement.

The Publications Committee and the editors-in-chief of the APS journals have agreed that authors must acknowledge possible conflicts of interest. Many other journals have already adopted this policy, and we, too, feel it is necessary to protect the reputation and credibility of both the investigators and the journals. Manuscripts will continue to be selected for publication solely on the basis of scientific merit and their suitability for a specific journal, but the Committee believes that disclosure of possible conflicts is in everyone's interest. The mandatory submission form is a convenient place to acknowledge any possible conflict. If a conflict is determined to exist, a footnote will appear on the first page of the published article. The Information for Authors will contain guidelines as to what constitutes a possible conflict.

In order to simplify things, the copyright transfer will also be included on the mandatory submission form. Thus, you will no longer be bothered by having to sign a separate copyright transfer form a week or so after submitting a paper. Approximately 6,500 manuscripts are submitted to the APS journals per year, and at a given time the Publications Department maintains 9,000 open manuscript files (under review or awaiting publication). In the past the Publications Department has spent considerable time, energy, and funds obtaining statements of originality, and copyright transfer forms were often still being sought months after a manuscript had been submitted. Simply stated, we can no longer afford to do this. Beginning in January the new "received" date will be the date the publications office in Bethesda receives the manuscript and the completed, signed submission form. At that time the manuscript will be sent to the appropriate editor for review. In the past the "accepted in final form" date was the date on the letter from the editor informing the author that a manuscript had been accepted, sometimes with minor revisions. The "accepted" date will now be the date the Publications Office receives the complete, final version of the manuscript, including all glossy figures and the computer disk. This change in policy is necessary because...
some members of the scientific community have the opinion that the publication time—the interval from acceptance to publication—is longer for APS journals than other journals. While a variety of factors can delay publication, common among these are author delays in providing the means (complete final versions, glossies, disks) to put the manuscript into production. Now both the “received” and “accepted in final form” dates will reflect when the authors have complied with the basic publication requirements.

I realize that at first glance these changes may not appear to be particularly user friendly and to needlessly formalize the procedures. Unfortunately, times have changed, and in order to run an efficient publications program it’s sometimes necessary to do things in a relatively inflexible manner. However, most authors already comply with all of the existing requirements in a timely and orderly manner. For you the mandatory submission form will actually simplify the procedure. Editors will still welcome letters from authors detailing significant points about their manuscripts, and the submission form will include a section for suggesting possible reviewers.

LEONARD R. JOHNSON, Chair
Publications Committee
December 1995