Editor-in-Chief’s Year-End Message

DEAR Readers, it seems that time flows by faster than we would like, and I am again preparing my year-end message, summarizing the most relevant news and events of this year.

It was again a busy year, because the number of submitted papers has been as relevant as in the past, proving that the IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON INSTRUMENTATION AND MEASUREMENT is more and more a desired journal to publish in. We worked hard to achieve this result, and we are still at work to make this journal the most desirable one.

As a journal in the field of Instrumentation and Measurement (I&M), we know the importance of measurements in keeping a process under control and as the basis for decisions aimed at improving it. For this reason, we monitor the review process constantly, looking not only at the official metrics, but also at some internal metrics that monitor the timeliness and quality of the review process. We are one of the very few journals that share their internal metrics with the readers and prospective authors, by updating and publishing them every month on the IEEE Instrumentation and Measurement Society web page dedicated to TIM at http://www.ieee-ims.org/publications/transactions-tim.

Our close vigilance on the whole review process has reflected on a steady improvement of the official metrics released by Thomson Reuters. I am really glad to say that the 2013 metrics released in July 2014 have significantly improved with respect to those released in 2013 and related to 2012. Our Impact Factor climbed from 1.357 to 1.710 and our 5 Year Impact Factor climbed from 1.382 to 1.683. The Impact Factor without journal self cites climbed from 1.044 to 1.278, thus showing that most received citations were not self cites, and self cites remained below the 20% of the total cites, which is absolutely normal for a leading journal in a specific field.

The close monitoring on the review process that led to a shorter submission to e-publication time, resulted also in an increment of the immediacy index, from 0.225 to 0.315. Also, the Eigenfactor Score and the Article Influence Score have improved this year, moving from 0.01465 to 0.01546 and from 0.410 to 0.461 respectively. It is also important to note that, in 2013, we published 371 articles, while, in 2012, we published 353 articles, thus proving that the number of received citations has increased far more than the number of published articles.

These metrics show us that TIM has improved all its factors, and is the only journal, among its closest competitors, that improved on all factors. This year our Impact Factor is the highest among our closest competitors!

As I wrote in my message last year, I do believe that these factors do not measure quality in a direct way. But there is also evidence that, if all of them increase and if they show a steadily increasing trend, this means that the journal and the articles it publishes are receiving an increasing attention by readers and authors, who find them interesting enough to be considered and cited in their articles. This is surely related to the journal quality and, after all, this is the ultimate goal of a journal: to be useful to its readers and the scientific community in the specific field covered by the journal’s scope.

I mentioned the scope because, in my opinion, publishing papers that are well framed inside the scope of a journal and well placed in the context of published literature in the same field is a key factor for achieving quality and attracting interest.

The I&M field is so wide and so rich of applications that many authors misunderstand the scope of this journal and submit papers that are only weakly related to I&M. However, the scope of this journal is clear: “Papers are sought that address innovative solutions to the development and use of electrical and electronic instruments and equipment to measure, monitor and/or record physical phenomena for the purpose of advancing measurement science, methods, functionality and applications.” The most important keyword is “advancing.” A paper that shows how well-known measurement methods and techniques can be applied to validate a model, or a control technique, is probably advancing knowledge on the specific model or control technique, but is not advancing knowledge in the I&M field, unless it compares itself against other available measurement methods and techniques, discusses measurement uncertainty, and shows that it provides a new insight into the I&M field.

This point is very often disregarded by the authors who submit papers to TIM, and this causes an immediate rejection of the submitted papers, because they are out of the scope of this journal. Luckily, a good number of these rejected papers are carefully revised by the authors and resubmitted, and some of them pass the review process and are published. This gives evidence that the scope of this journal is not fully perceived by many authors, probably because the I&M culture has not yet fully developed in several scientific domains, and too often reading an instrument is confused with making a measurement. On the other hand, I believe that one of the reasons of the improved official metrics lies also in our efforts to explain to the authors, with our comments to their papers, what the I&M community expects from our journal, so that they can improve their papers and make them interesting and attractive to this community. I hope that these few notes may help perspective authors to better frame their contributions in the I&M field, so that they will see them more quickly considered for publication.

There is one more important point I would like to share with you. As you know, since 2012, the IEEE has allowed authors to publish their accepted papers under an Open Access (OA) policy. I have already commented on this policy and
how it has been implemented in hybrid journals, such as TIM, in my year-end message last year. As a matter of fact, our authors appear to be not interested in such policy, since only 4 papers have been published as OA papers since 2012, out of almost 1000 published papers in the same period. Despite the situation being not dissimilar with most other journals, the IEEE invested a lot of money on the publication infrastructure, to properly manage fully OA and hybrid journals.

The invested money has been taken from the publication revenues, thus causing a significant decrement in the revenues the IEEE Societies receive from their journals. The Instrumentation and Measurement Society (IMS) is no exception, and, since most of the money we invest to serve our members comes from publication revenues, to continue offering the same high-quality services we have offered until now, we are in need to offset, at least partially, the decrease in publication revenues by increasing the fee we require for every page exceeding the free limit of 8 pages.

I cannot anticipate to you the entity of this increment since the decision had to be taken during the Fall meeting of the Society’s Administrative Committee, that was still to come at the moment this message was prepared. However, I can anticipate to you that we are working with the IEEE to implement a two-tiers fee, so that the IMS members can receive a discounted rate. We recognize that the IMS and this journal exist thanks to our members, and the contribution they give as qualified Authors, Reviewers and Associate Editors, and we think this is a tangible way to reward them for their support. I sincerely hope the IEEE has the infrastructure to allow us doing this. Should this not be the case, be assured that I will try again and again, until the 2-tiers fee will be a reality.

In conclusion, I feel encouraged by the good results reflected by both our internal metrics and the official ones to continue on this path, that is receiving an increasing favor by the scientific and technical community that refers to the I&M field.

I know that I will be supported by the team of Associate Editors and Reviewers, to whom goes my warmest thank you, because this journal could not have achieved these results without their dedication and the huge amount of time they volunteer to the review process. A great thank you also to Dr. Sergey Kharkovsky, who served as Associate EIC in 2014, and helped me in managing the review process.

Let me now conclude this message with a huge thank you to Mrs. Cam Ingelin and Mrs. Reta Wehmeier who helped me, the AEIC, the Associate Editors, the Reviewers, and the Authors run the whole submission and review process in a smooth and timely way. Their dedication and their tireless work are simply invaluable!

ALESSANDRO FERRERO, Editor-in-Chief
Dipartimento di Elettronica, Informazione e Bioingegneria
Politecnico di Milano
Milan 20133, Italy