FUTURE OF THE PHYSICAL REVIEW

The Physical Review is still growing, to the point where its size already impedes its usefulness to many subscribers. We are convinced that an important function of the journals is to render a service to our members. The division into Sections A and B has not done so, as shown by the fact that it has not produced an increase in member subscriptions. We suggest therefore a further split into four or five divisions. The journal itself will be recombined into one unit, but members, and members only, will be permitted to subscribe to one or more portions of the journal. The number of divisions can be altered and their contents redistributed when future changes in physics require this. Our initial proposal calls for five divisions according to subject matter (details refer to the new Physical Review subject index shown on page 288):

a. Physics of Atoms and Molecules, Fluids, and Miscellaneous Topics. (Primary index classifications 20, 30, and 10.)

b. and c. Physics of Solids. (Primary index classification 40.) Because of its size this part will have to be split into two sections. Those interested will most likely want both sections, so that the precise point of division is not very important.

d. Physics of Nuclei. (Primary index classification 50.)

e. Physics of Elementary Particles and Fields. (Primary index classification 60.)

Each of these sections will be issued once a month and every subscriber will receive a monthly author and subject index to the combined journal, which will be numbered as one volume per month. A cumulative index will appear every six months. Each section will contain approximately 300 pages per month. We expect most members to want two sections. Preliminary estimates show that the first section will cost between $10 and $12, each additional section about $8, and a member subscription to

the complete journal between $32 and $35 per year, roughly the cost of four sections. Authors will be asked to indicate the principal subject classification of their paper, thus determining the section in which they wish it to appear.

We believe that this scheme will make the journal more acceptable to the individual research worker and hence increase the total number of member subscribers. The intention is, however, solely to help the user of the journal; the financial status of our Society is essentially independent of the number of member subscriptions. The rates are more likely to result in a small loss than in a profit for our treasury.

A lengthy study by the editors and the editorial staff has indicated that the proposed plan is the most practical scheme among several considered so far. An often suggested plan is to publish only Abstracts and have subscribers select only those individual articles of which they want the complete text. This is equivalent to splitting The Physical Review into 40 different journals with a different list of subscribers every week! In spite of this extreme complexity such a scheme has been tried by others. It failed because the subscribers did not use it. In fact we cannot believe that each one of ten or twenty thousand physicists will decide every week which few articles out of a list of forty he wants to read in full. With our proposal, he needs to make a much easier decision only once a year.

Our proposal may also prevent the appearance of several narrowly specialized splinter journals as is happening in other sciences. Such journals are an expensive burden for libraries, while only a very small fraction of a society's membership subscribes.

The alternative is to let The Physical Review become a purely archival journal, available primarily in libraries and having only a small number of individual subscribers. It has been stated that journals are no longer the principal means of communication in physics but that preprints, topical meetings, travel, and telephone

calls are used to spread the news. We believe, however, that such methods reach only a small self-styled "elite" and that the journals can cover a very much larger community of interested colleagues.

The Editors would like to see the five-way split go into effect in 1966. This is possible only if we can be certain that it will benefit our membership. It is of course simpler and financially safer to do nothing. We request therefore that you discuss this problem with colleagues and that you let us know your opinion on whether the proposed plan is good, bad, or indifferent. You can write to us, or if you prefer, to your favorite Council member. But please limit your remarks to this problem only.

We know that this sort of sounding is fallible: The division into Sections A and B has not produced an increase in the number of member subscriptions, whereas the advance poll made us expect a substantial rise. However we wish to get some guidance from those most interested, our readers.

S. A. Goudsmit

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