

Even before the appearance of the first issue of ISR, Peter Farago and I had decided that only a very high standard of contributions would be acceptable. This was of course easy to achieve if the author was personally known to us, or if either of us had read his publications, but that was not always a sufficient guarantee that he could also write for a wide scientific readership which was our aim. At the beginning we could not show any sample issues of ISR as a guide, and if we had adopted the standard lengthy refereeing system, first publication might have had to be delayed for a year or so.

We therefore invented what we called 'A Modified Referee System'. We asked the prospective author to submit to the Editor a Synopsis of 500 words of his proposed contribution. We argued correctly, as it turned out time and time again, that if an author could write 500 words clearly and convincingly, he would be able to do the same for an article in 5000 words, the average length of the major contributions. It is well known that it is far easier to write at great length, than a short précis, and that it demands a thorough knowledge of a subject to decide what to include and what to leave out.

Having received a synopsis of 500 words, it was always easy for me to decide to which Member of the Editorial Board I should submit it for his or her comments. To read 500 words is no great task for anyone, however many other demands on his time await him. I always duplicated any synopsis received and sent it to five Members of the Board, and only rarely did I have to follow the majority verdict or exercise my final Editorial authority.

As the title of the Journal was relatively novel, and it was at the beginning quite unknown, there was no stream of articles flooding the Editor's office. In fact during the 20 years of my work for ISR, the number of unsolicited articles was very small, and if it did occur, the modified referee system provided an easy check on an unknown author's standing.

I never had any complaints from Members of my Board that the task of reading and commenting on 500 words was onerous or difficult. Of course with 60 to 70 Members from which to choose, the need to request their comments on a synopsis might occur perhaps once every two years, really no great chore. It was their only duty, I explained, when inviting a new Member to join the Board, and in return they received a free subscription to the Journal and an invitation to an annual dinner. I always tried to make it a festive, rather than a formal occasion. These dinners were held either at an Oxford or Cambridge College of a Member of the Board, at my Club, the Savile in London, one in the USA at the Cosmos Club, Washington, and one at the House of Lords. [See Title 350]