ANNOUNCEMENT: FASTER PUBLICATION TIMES FOR ELECTRONIC MANUSCRIPTS AND OTHER CHANGES

The possibilities offered by electronic publishing—from the author's preparation of the manuscript to its final embodiment—are tremendous, including direct dissemination of large data sets, sophisticated indexing and search tools, and inclusion of forms of information not possible on the printed page. From the perspective of a traditional scientific journal, however, the most immediate goals of using the emerging technology are faster, more accurate, and less costly publication. By making direct use of authors' electronic manuscripts and artwork through all the stages of the publication process, publishers can bypass the keyboarding and some of the camera work that previously fell upon the typesetter and occasionally introduced errors.

At present, more than half of the manuscripts submitted to the Astrophysical Journal are prepared electronically, and authors are already experiencing fewer errors incurred in publication. In addition, experience has shown that we can now routinely offer faster publication for electronic manuscripts if the authors adhere to the AASTEX macros. These manuscripts not only escape the laborious additional steps at the typesetter's but can also be copyedited on-line, with queries resolved with the authors through e-mail, thus avoiding the transmission of paper manuscripts through the mails several times. The third goal, less expensive publication (without compromising editorial standards), still needs to be assessed by the AAS before we can offer lower page charges.

To help authors take advantage of the increased efficiency of the electronic publishing process, beginning with the 1996 May 1 issue of the Journal, we have included new Instructions for Authors with a section specifically devoted to guidelines for electronic submissions. We have also updated many of the instructions regarding artwork, and now encourage authors to submit their figures as well as their manuscripts in electronic form.

Because we have eliminated the step of returning copyedited manuscripts, the first version that the authors of electronic manuscripts will see will be the typeset page proofs. Therefore, authors should not expect to add extensive material or otherwise make optional changes after acceptance. To compensate for the accelerated production schedule, we have instituted a policy of informing authors of their paper's acceptance by e-mail and holding it for 48 hours before sending it to the University of Chicago Press production office, so that an updated version can be sent if necessary. The editorial offices will quote expected publication dates, but electronically submitted manuscripts will be printed one or two issues earlier than the paper ones whenever possible.

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Looking at the Journal issues published since 1995 November 10, one may get the impression that the issues are slimmer and that therefore fewer papers are being published. The first is true, but the second is not. Instead, we have found a new paper stock that is 22% thinner (creating thinner issues) and 10% lighter in weight (providing a savings on postage), but still with the same 93% opacity. A leveling of the numbers of papers submitted has not yet occurred.

A more subtle change, inaugurated with the 1996 March 1 issue, involves type size. Font sizes are not completely standard, so the last time we changed typesetters we added the process of preparing the printed version and then photoreducing it by 5% to match the previous type size. To save this additional expense, we are now retaining the larger type size and are compensating in text per page by having smaller margins at the top and bottom of pages and adding one line of type to the page length. The new, larger type is marginally easier to read.

Finally, the microfiche edition was intended to help libraries with crowded shelves, but librarians have learned that those sheets are stolen too easily. Recently, the only microfiche subscribers have been individuals who have bought microfiche readers and like the easy transportation of the sheets. But we are now down to 69 microfiche subscribers, who hardly cover the costs incurred, and we suspect that they will be pleased with the on-line version of Part 1 and the Supplements that is planned for 1997 January. Therefore, we will terminate the microfiche edition at the end of 1996. It was a worthwhile experiment, but our technology is changing.

HELMUT A. ABT
Editor-in-Chief