

EDITORIAL

Here is the first issue of Physical Review Letters. We hope that it will gain the approval of authors and readers. Speed of publication is achieved at the expense of printing elegance. We believe, however, that this does not reduce the clarity and ease of reading, even though the number of symbols available in this type of reproduction is much more limited than in letterpress printing.

To maintain the high speed and high standards, only Letters which really deserve rapid publication should be submitted. Since there is little time or none at all for refereeing, most of the decisions for acceptance and for minor alterations will have to be made in the Editor's office. We shall do our best to make as few mistakes as possible but for this we require the cooperation of authors and an understanding on their part of the many problems facing a journal of this type.

Physical Review Letters is an experiment. This first issue is triple size; it contains the Letters which formerly would have appeared in three consecutive issues of The Physical Review. We intend to make changes and improvements in the course of time. But if we fail we can return to the old "Letters to the Editor" column in The Physical Review.

S. A. Goudsmit

As the Managing Editor has noted, the rapid publication schedule of Physical Review Letters reduces to a minimum the time available for editing. In the past, it has been possible to make in galley minor changes of errors noticed either by the author or in the editorial offices, the latter frequently after consultation with the author. With the method of reproduction adopted for this journal, however, such a luxury is not possible. Material leaves the editorial offices in the form in which it will appear in print. Thus it becomes imperative for authors to exercise extreme care in the preparation of manuscripts. For guidance in this respect, there appears on the inside front cover of this issue a page of Information for Contributors. This and the American Institute of Physics Style Manual should be closely followed. We remark, in addition, that typographical errors are to be assiduously avoided.

Moreover, it should be noted that speed without effectiveness is useless; this is especially cogent in regard to Abstracts. In this connection, we can do no better than to quote from the Information for Contributors to The Physical Review:

"An abstract....should be adequate as an index and as a summary. As an index, it should give all subjects, major and minor, concerning which new information is presented. As a summary, it should give the conclusions of the article and all numerical results of general interest."

Lastly, attention must be drawn to the fact that the method of reproduction creates problems in regard to notation. The method involves photographic reproduction of typed material. Thus it will be reasonably easy to "decorate" a given symbol with various distinguishing marks. But in view of the fact that there is a tendency (a natural and desirable one) for notation established in one communication to be carried over into subsequent work, the Editor will vigorously resist the use in Letters of notation which will present difficulties if used in Articles.

In fact, the method is a sword which cuts both ways, as the typewriter is a much less complex and therefore less flexible instrument than a Monotype machine. Essentially, it has only one font; symbols not in that font can be inserted, but only by means of processes which are more or less cumbersome and more or less unsatisfactory. Developments are in progress which are expected to loosen this restriction somewhat in the near future, but for the present we are bound by it. Specifically, the following conditions are imposed: (1) Numerical subscripts and superscripts will cause no difficulty, but literal subscripts and superscripts will already look a bit awkward, and subscripts and superscripts of subscripts and superscripts should be avoided. (2) Boldface characters must be reserved for (three-dimensional) vector quantities, as they will be denoted by arrows; boldface italic will not be available. (3) Alphabets other than Latin and Greek should be avoided.

Authors who fail to use judgment and/or ingenuity in these matters before submitting a paper may be required to do so after acceptance of the paper, with resultant delay.

George L. Trigg