

Report of the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on ASEE Publications & Policies

(Note: Following review & approval at the annual conference, it is proposed that this be issued as “Report on ASEE Divisional Perspectives on ASEE Publications & Policies”)

During the 2016 ASEE interdivisional meeting for current & incoming program/division chairs, we reviewed a document compiled by the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on ASEE Publications & Policies that outlined various aspects of ASEE’s present publications options and policies. Those attending the meeting encouraged the subcommittee to continue its work, and to produce a report, with recommendations, for further consideration by the group.

This report was drafted in response to our suggestion. This overall conversation also builds on an initial request by the PIC Chairs that the program/division chairs’ meeting be used as a forum for collecting ASEE member views on this topic.

Positive Aspects

- **ASEE’s current “publish to present” policies give many individuals, especially at predominately teaching-oriented institutions but also those in selected fields, an important place to publish.** There is a relatively low threshold to publication, and these works can carry value in P&T decisions at teaching-oriented institutions. They also appear to count towards the P&T decisions of the members of certain divisions (e.g. Engineering Libraries Division) where peer-reviewed conference proceedings are a recognized form of research publication.
- **The ASEE conference proceedings also serve as a central location and clearinghouse** for much valuable work in engineering education. The searchability of the proceedings provides a valuable means of identifying researchers and practitioners active in a specific area of engineering education.
- **The publication process for the ASEE conference proceedings is fairly efficient.** Given that it takes less than a year to go from abstract to publication, the proceedings offer a vehicle for the rapid dissemination of work and research results when compared to most journals. This relatively short time to publication, coupled with ASEE’s “open” distribution policy makes ASEE conference proceedings a valuable resource for many authors and readers.
- **The peer review process that accompanies the current “publish to present” policy can provide authors with valuable, scholarly feedback on their written work.** For many, this has helped to improve their work prior to submission to a peer-reviewed journal. A published conference proceeding may also push scholars to move their work more quickly towards publication in mainstream journals.

- **Presentation and publication at the ASEE annual conference clearly also helps to build professional networks.** To the extent to which published conferences proceedings encourage participation by a larger number of engineering educators, this strengthens the professional network in specific areas of engineering education.
- **In particular, participation in ASEE annual meetings has become important and necessary for those seeking to achieve “national recognition” for engineering education research.** ASEE remains the primary venue for the growing number of scholars engaged in engineering education research.
- **To the extent to which “publish to present” policies have also elevated the level of scholarship at our annual meetings,** our professional networks have experienced additional benefits as a scholarly community. However, this gain may not be uniform across divisions or fields of study.

Aspects Deserving Attention

- **While *JEE, Advances in Engineering Education, and the ASEE Annual Conference Proceedings* offer complementary venues,** and there are a number of other research journals in engineering education, it is not clear that these publications offer sufficient outlets for all work in engineering education. The editorial policies of these journals might also be contributing to a “gap,” where certain kinds of work have no obvious outlet. While JEE and AEE have their own editorial boards, it is not clear that ASEE has a body capable of assessing the overall publication needs of our present engineering education community. The ASEE Board, if operating as a whole, may be too large to maintain proper oversight over ASEE publications.
- **The ASEE conference proceedings is not necessarily a high status publication.** Conference papers are not universally recognized as having the same status as a peer-reviewed journal article, and this may adversely impact promotion and tenure for some. The problem is especially acute for those who have to stand before P&T committees within a school or college of Engineering.
- **There also remains a disconnect between the need to present and publish at the ASEE annual meetings in order to obtain professional recognition, and the fact that these publications don’t always count towards P&T.** This needs to be addressed.
- **ASEE conference proceedings provide only limited exposure.** At present, it still appears that peer reviewed journal articles receive better exposure than ASEE conference proceedings. Journal articles continue to receive wider indexing than conference proceedings, and hence many authors and institutions will continue to view journal articles as a better venue for publication. Journals also provide increased findability through existing search tools and academic databases when compared to the search capabilities offered in a stand-alone conference URL or society depository. Traditionally, it had been hard to locate ASEE conference papers. (The current Director of ASEE’s Editorial Department notes that he recognizes that the proceedings should be more widely indexed.)
- **In the rush to obtain recognition for engineering education research, the scope of material presented and published through ASEE may have become more narrow.** This may be an unintended consequence of our publish-to-present policy, which may favor certain kinds of

publications—more factual and data driven rather than conceptual, for instance. The policy may also be contributing to a “show up, present, and get out” mentality that doesn’t support rich dialogue during the annual meeting.

- **Peer review is not necessarily consistent** or equivalent across the divisions, and across reviewers. While we are not sure whether uniform standards would be beneficial to the divisions, improvements to the process should be possible.
- **The ASEE annual conference is too expensive** for some, and possibly many. While some colleges of engineering may offer sufficiently generous travel allowances, there are institutions as well as fields of study (e.g. liberal education; engineering libraries) where travel allowances are not sufficient to enable sustained participation in ASEE. People drop out in certain fields. Uneven support may also contribute to disproportionate representation and an unwanted shift in the focus of ASEE. (Those who find ASEE too expensive may be turning to publication in refereed journals instead of attending the annual meetings as their primary scholarly outlet. Given the small number of engineering education journals, potential scholars may also choose to pursue other work.)
- **The assignment of copyright by the author to ASEE for a conference proceeding is viewed negatively** by many professionals in the engineering libraries field. It appears to be ASEE’s intent for ASEE conference papers to be re-publishable in academic journals following substantial expansion and/or rework (*see note below on our understanding of current ASEE policy). However, not all journals will accept previously published material for republication, even after significant changes are made. Policies appear to vary by journal, and by discipline (especially those, such as in the humanities, where publication outlets are limited.) Many presenters cannot afford their work to be “stuck” within a conference proceeding, especially when their field gives published proceedings significantly less weight than a journal article. Whatever the solution, ASEE’s claims of copyright should be more clearly delimited so as to enable subsequent publication in a referred journal.
- **The assignment of copyright, when paired with the low status of conference proceedings in certain fields** has had adverse impacts in terms of number and quality of paper submissions in some divisions.
- **Cost of publication is in a way disguised**, since the minimum cost for participation in the annual meeting would include airfare, registration, hotel, and food and incidentals.

Possible Changes / Recommendations

- **We recommend that the Board consider the merits of having a publications committee or Board subcommittee**, separate from, but with appropriate representation from the editorial boards of individual ASEE publications. It would be the responsibility of such a body to review the publication options and policies of the ASEE on a regular basis. They could more properly evaluate several of the recommendations that follow.
- **If ASEE continues to uphold its current “publish to present” policy, we should create a clear path for conference papers to evolve into journal articles.** This is said with the full recognition that most conference papers will require significant revision, and all published material must

meet the editorial standards of *JEE* and *AEE*. Select papers from the ASEE annual conference should be reviewed for possible publication in the *Journal of Engineering Education* and *Advances in Engineering Education*. While there are various possible mechanisms for implementation, some possibilities would be to work with the best papers process to identify papers that would be reviewed by the editor of our journals; to have reviewers recommend papers for publication; and to have journal editors reach out to authors whose paper drew significant attention at the annual conference.

- **We recommend that ASEE consider supporting one or more additional scholarly publications**, including those oriented towards describing radical innovations; developing a shared vision for the future of engineering education; policy discussions; and perhaps even a less formal publication designed to foster conversations across the divisions. While selected member comments are published in the “Emails” section of *Prism*, reintroducing more robust opportunities for members to submit comments, announcements, and responses to current issues in engineering education might benefit our community. We might also consider launching a *Reviews in Engineering Education*. ASEE might also review the relative merits of launching any new publication(s) as open access journals or fully on-line journals.
- **There may be concrete ways to increase the visibility and stature of the ASEE conference proceedings.** One step that might be relatively easy to implement is to divide the conference proceedings into separate volumes by broad subject area, and to apply standard pagination to the volume so that papers can be cited in standard academic form.
- **The publications policies for the ASEE annual conference and for other ASEE publications should be adjusted to serve engineering educators from all types of institutions** (both research and teaching). We should weigh the costs and benefits of more selective publication in the proceedings, and the value of ASEE’s existing publications in the professional advancement of different constituencies within ASEE.
- **The ASEE Divisions might also be encouraged to create their own publications**, similar to the *transactions* offered by individual IEEE societies. Several divisions already do so, as may be found at this link: (<https://www.asee.org/papers-and-publications/publications/division-publications>). This could lead to more specialized publications in engineering education & research. While this may not be feasible for all but the largest divisions to do so on their own, smaller divisions with aligned interests could work together to produce transactions in specific areas.
- **ASEE should review the copyright policies for the annual conference proceedings.** In general, we feel appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that publication in our proceedings does not pose problems for those seeking to convert their work into a refereed journal article. An option to have a work listed as a prepublication of a work for comment, without it counting as a formal publication, might be possible. Those participating in poster sessions may be interested in having the option to publish only extended abstracts.
- **If such legal/formal demarcations are not possible, ASEE division chairs and/or program chairs may wish to review whether current policies, including the republication policies of the major journals in their discipline impact their members, and offer them appropriate guidance.** This

might include advising them on how to differentiate ASEE conference papers from subsequent journal articles in ways that meet the scholarly expectations of their discipline; and/or to weigh the relative merits of a conference presentation (with proceedings) vs. a journal publication. A customizable memo that might serve this purpose is attached as an Appendix, below. The ASEE Editorial Department may also wish to develop and maintain guidelines that could be used by division chairs and program chairs for more consistent attention to this issue.

- **We would like for there to be some kind of forum (and possibly a sustained forum) where we can discuss what constitutes scholarship within ASEE.** This might help move our field (engineering education) forwards.
- **With regards to the uniformity of the peer review process,** we might carry out an assessment of current practice (evaluation criteria, threshold, length of reviews, and communication with and selection process for reviewers) as found within the ASEE divisions, and as a first step, develop published recommendations and guidelines based on that assessment. (The Engineering Libraries Division's Publications Committee is working on guidelines for authors and reviewers that we may want to consider as a model.)

Members of the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on ASEE Publication Options & Policies

Atsushi Akera (LEES)
 Shyam Aravam (OME)
 Alan Cheville (ERM)
 Scott Curtis (ELD)
 Fernando Gonzalez (SECC)
 John Heywood (TELPhE)
 Ibironke Lawal (ELD)
 Angie Minichiello (Engineering Ethics)
 Madhumi Mitra (ECCD)
 Stephen Secules (Student Division)
 Denver Tang (LEES)
 Joe Tranquillo (Biomedical)

(28 February 2017)

*Note: It's our understanding that ASEE's current policy with regards to copyright and republication is reflected in the following statement:

"You are free to submit the papers to journals, provided they accept the fact that ASEE holds the copyright and agree to cite the ASEE conference as the place where a paper was first presented. Citations typically say something like: ©2015 American Society for Engineering Education, ASEE Annual Conference, city, state.

“For ASEE to relinquish its copyright, at least 50 percent of the revised article must be new material. If the new material accounts for less than 50 percent, a footnote should state: Substantial portions of this article were drawn from [paper title] ©2015 (or correct year) American Society for Engineering Education, ASEE Annual Conference, [city, state].” (forwarded by one of the members of our group.)

Appendix

We recommend that each of the ASEE divisions and its officers:

- Review our report,
 - Discuss the promotion and tenure policies within the constitutive discipline(s) for your division, with attention to difference across institutions,
 - And if applicable, consult with the editors from the major journals in your discipline and determine whether they are willing, in principle, to publish material previously published as an ASEE conference proceeding, and what their requirements are.
 - Review and revise the memo below, and distribute to your members.
 - Program chairs may also want to upload comparable information to Monolith as guidance to authors and reviewers.
-

Dear [x Division] Members:

The ASEE “publish to present” policy offers various advantages and potential issues as outlined in a report produced by an ASEE Ad Hoc Subcommittee on ASEE Publication Options & Policies. A copy of this report may be found [at this site](#). The officers of our division have reviewed this document, the promotion and tenure standards (and republication policies of major journals, if applicable) in our field of study, and recommend the following for the members of our division:

(Choose one:)

- ___ The promotion & tenure standards in the discipline(s) and in the institutions in which our members are employed tend to give **strong recognition to published conference proceedings**.
- ___ The promotion & tenure standards and the republication **policies of the major journals in our field vary**. You may wish to familiarize yourself with which journals allow republication of material previously published in the ASEE conference proceedings. (*Add appropriate elaboration here, including the titles of the journals known to accept republication, and their requirements, if any, for differentiation.*) You may need to maintain appropriate differentiation between your conference papers and journal articles, by content and/or length, or else weigh the benefits of presenting your work at ASEE versus submitting it directly to an academic journal.
- ___ The promotion & tenure standards and the republication policies of the major journals in our field are such that **you may have to differentiate your conference papers from your journal articles**, by content and/or length. (*Elaborate, if appropriate.*) You may need, in some instances, to weigh the benefits of presenting your work at ASEE versus submitting it directly to an academic journal.

(Include this section if relevant to your division)

In addition,

(Choose one:)

___ Our division will allow you to **substitute a synopsis** of your paper so that the full paper may be submitted subsequently to an academic journal.

___ Our division requires that the **full paper be retained** for publication in the conference proceedings. Appropriate differentiation between conference paper and journal article must occur prior to any draft you submit for review.

It is also our understanding, as reproduced from the Report, that the current ASEE policy with regards to releasing copyright for ASEE conference proceedings is reflected in the statement below.

“You are free to submit the papers to journals, provided they accept the fact that ASEE holds the copyright and agree to cite the ASEE conference as the place where a paper was first presented. Citations typically say something like: ©2015 American Society for Engineering Education, ASEE Annual Conference, city, state.

“For ASEE to relinquish its copyright, at least 50 percent of the revised article must be new material. If the new material accounts for less than 50 percent, a footnote should state: Substantial portions of this article were drawn from [paper title] ©2015 (or correct year) American Society for Engineering Education, ASEE Annual Conference, [city, state].”

Sincerely,

<names & titles of division officers transmitting this memo>