List of potential problems with papers submitted to the *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*

The items on this list are not necessarily ones that will lead to outright rejection of a manuscript submitted to JASA. However, they are items which are likely to irritate Associate Editors and reviewers and which possibly could influence the decision on a manuscript.

**Submission**

1. There is an absence of an explanatory cover letter, when such a letter is appropriate. The nature of the paper may be such that the Editors are likely to wonder why the authors have chosen to submit the paper to JASA, and the cover letter should give an explanation.

2. The authors give too general a principal PACS number. The first PACS number given should help the Manuscript Manager to quickly identify one or more Associate Editors who might be willing to handle the paper.

3. The authors give an inappropriate list of suggested reviewers. These might be people who are obvious close friends of the authors, persons who have little association with acoustics, or persons who the JASA Associate Editors are unlikely to know or to believe to be able to write an objective knowledgeable review.

4. The authors have done a sloppy job in filling out the online submission form. Perhaps they paid very little attention to the requirements stated in the JASA information for contributors. The title might not be in the proper format or the author’s names may not be in the proper format. Such will cause the Manuscript Manager and the Associate Editor to question whether the authors have really read the *Information for Contributors* document.

5. The authors state that certain persons should be excluded as reviewers without giving adequate reason in the cover letter for such an exclusion. In many cases, it is extremely difficult for the Editors to identify
knowledgeable reviewers. If the authors state that they wish that an obvious good choice not be consulted, the Editors could view this as the raising of a flag concerning the quality of the paper.

6. The e-mail addresses of all the coauthors are not given. The corresponding author is required to certify that all of the coauthors have agreed to the submission of the original and to any revisions. However, the coauthors are generally cc-ed on all decision-related correspondence from the Journal, and it is reassuring to the Editors to know that the coauthors are aware of how the handling of the manuscript is progressing. It would, for example, be good if a coauthor with a better command of writing skills was aware that the paper was encountering difficulties, given that the corresponding author was too proud to admit to needing help.

7. The authors have no tangible identification with acoustics, their previous papers are in other journals, and the current submission looks as if the paper would have been more appropriate for one of the journals in which the authors customary publish. The natural suspicion is that the paper was actually submitted to one of the other journals and was rejected. [This might be offset by an appropriate cover letter and/or a profusion of references to recent papers in JASA.]

Title

1. The title in written in grammatically incorrect English. An example would be the missing of an article before a singular noun. Several languages, such as Latin, do not use articles, but English requires them, and a title which omits them, if published, would be an embarrassment to the Journal.

2. The title is not sufficiently specific and over-generalizes the application of the ideas in the paper. The title should represent a reasonable attempt to succinctly describe the subject of the paper.

3. The title contains acronyms. (Acronyms are not allowed in titles of JASA papers, unless they can be found in a standard English dictionary.)
4. The authors have intended that their title be “cute.” The title is inappropriate for a scholarly journal, although it might be appropriate for a newspaper opinion piece.

5. The title is too long. The upper limit allowed by JASA is 17 words.

6. The title is misleading, and it is inconsistent with the actual content of the paper.

7. The authors have invented a new compound word to be included in the title of their paper. While the roots of the compound word may be intelligible to many readers, the actual meaning of the collection may not be. It is preferable that any coining of new words be relegated to the actual text of the manuscript and that very explicit definitions be given when such words are introduced. If the word is not in a standard dictionary, it should not be used in the title of a paper.

8. The title is incomprehensible to almost anyone, including persons active in related areas of acoustics.

9. The title contains gratuitous assertions such as the use of the words “new,” “original,” and “novel.” Ideally, the ideas and results given in a JASA are new, and the title need not reassert this. The readers and the reviewers will make their own assessments of the novelty of a paper.

10. The title contains the name of a trademarked item. In some cases, this may be appropriate, if the inclusion of the name will help exemplify the subject of the paper, but the title should not imply an endorsement of a commercial item.

11. The abstract contains jargon words that cannot be found in a standard dictionary.

12. The title contains an allusion to a methodology or a computer program with a coined phrase that is not in standard use. The individual words in the phrase might be in the dictionary but their collective use as a proper noun is generally not considered appropriate for JASA.

13. The title contains the name of an organization or region, such as “Recent noise measurements in coal mines in Lower Slobovia,” or “Experiments on ultrasound in the Advanced Technology Institute of the Way Below Normal Research University.”
Authors

1. The number of coauthors seems excessive in relation to the scope of the paper. It is expected that each coauthor contributed to the work reported and to the actual writing of the paper in a nontrivial way. A large number suggests that some of the authors are only “honorary authors.”

2. The order of the names of the authors is not the same as would correspond to the proportional contribution of the authors. The author who contributed the most should be listed first.

3. The names of one of more of the authors are given in a foreign style. The words in the names: first name, middle names or initials, last name, family distinguishers (such as Jr.), must be in the customary order.

4. Titles such as academic degrees, academic ranks, and organizational titles are given with the author names. The Journal wants only the actual names.

5. The addresses of the authors contain multiple addresses for one or more authors. JASA desires only one address for each author. Ordinarily, the address listed is the address at which readers can contact the authors by mail if they so desire, but it may be a former address if the work was done at that address. It is permissible to give the address at which the work was actually performed, even if not the current address of the author, but the current address should be given in a footline.

6. The nature of the manuscript strongly suggests that not all of the coauthors have read or participated in the writing of the paper. A common example is a manuscript written in very poor English, and when it is likely that some of the authors who are capable of writing good English and who would recognize bad writing have not actually approved of the submission.

7. Author addresses appear to be necessarily inflated. For example, if an author who is at a university chooses to call herself or himself and some graduate students and post-doctoral students a group, having the group designation as part of the mailing address would not be appropriate.
Abstract

1. The abstract is too long. Abstracts for regular articles in JASA are limited to 200 words. Abstracts for letters are limited to 100 words. Word-counting software is freely available, and it is expected that authors have made use of such.

2. The abstract contains more than one paragraph. Abstracts in JASA are limited to a single paragraph.

3. The abstract contains personal pronouns, such as the words “we,” “our,” “I,” or “my.” This is not allowed for abstracts in JASA, and a discussion of the reasons for this can be found in the JASA Information for Contributors. Third-person personal pronouns are allowed in the body of the text, as an author-selected means for avoiding excessive use of the passive voice.

4. The abstract makes excessive use of acronyms. Any acronym used in the abstract must be defined in the abstract, and the authors should not introduce any acronym unless it is essential to achieve a necessary succinctness in the wording.

5. The abstract has gratuitous sentences discussing the importance of the subject and the background. If the work is a direct extension of a previously published paper, then an explicit referral to that paper is warranted in the abstract. Similarly, if the work gives results that contradict those of a previously published paper, that paper should be referred to in the abstract.

6. The abstract refers, by number, to a paper cited in the body of the paper. The abstract must be stand-alone, and the reading of the abstract should not require the reading of the paper.

7. The abstract does not give a reasonable indication of the the subject-matter of the paper, in a manner that can be understood by a broad readership.

8. The abstract does not give an indication of just what is new in the paper, of the nature of the conclusions that are given in the paper, or of what is achieved in the paper.
Paper scope

1. The scope of the paper is too broad for a single research paper. Usually this is indicated if the paper is excessively long. Ordinarily, authors are expected to limit the scopes of individual papers so that the manuscript will require no more than 12 pages when printed in JASA. Occasionally, a paper of limited scope will be such that an account that is intelligent to the majority of readers will require more than 12 pages, but it should be manifestly clear to the Associate Editor and to the reviewers that this unusual length is justified and that the authors have only included what is necessary in the relating of the details of the research.

2. The scope of the paper is such that the paper is clearly more appropriate for another journal than for JASA.

3. The scope of the paper is too parochial. If, for example, the authors report noise measurements at a specific site that is of very little interest to the vast majority of the readers, the paper is too narrow, unless the authors can use the measurements to draw novel and persuasive inferences about measurements at a wide variety of sites.

4. The scope of the paper is such that it is strongly suspected that nobody now and in the next hundred years, except for perhaps the authors and their friends, will want to read or to cite the paper in future works.

5. The paper is a distinct sequel of one or more papers that the author(s) have published, and the paper cannot be understood unless the reader first reads the preceding paper(s). If the preceding paper was hardly ever cited and/or barely survived the review process, the Editor may have concerns about finding someone to review the paper.

6. All of the literature cited that would appear to be mandatory reading for understanding the present paper appeared predominantly in a single journal different than JASA. The question naturally arises as to why the authors did not choose to submit to that other journal, and as to whether the manuscript is outside the de facto scope of JASA.

7. The paper is not truly acoustics. The scope may be such that the general work may be applicable to several fields, not necessarily just acoustics. Unless the authors stress the application to acoustics and
indicate how it ties into other current work in acoustics, the paper is probably more appropriate to some other journal.

Writing in general

1. The overall manuscript is such that the reader cannot easily draw a clear picture of what the present manuscript does that significantly improves the state of the art in the field.

2. The paper reads more like a report to a sponsor on a project, rather than a paper directed to other researchers in the field. Such reports have their place, but should not double as research papers. Evidence that the paper is more appropriate as a report includes the presence of an excessive number of figures and tables.

3. The paper reads more like a thesis for an advanced degree than like a research article. Theses are typically written to satisfy institutional requirements and to placate a broadly interdisciplinary thesis committee. Their scopes are also typically greater than that of a single paper. A paper should be more succinct and directed toward persons who have a greater degree of acquaintance with the field.

4. The paper exhibits an immodest attempt to praise the authors’ achievements. The research reported in the paper must be reported objectively.

5. The paper contains an excessive number of superlatives.

6. The paper exhibits an fawning attitude toward one of more previous contributors in the field. It would be inappropriate, for example, to refer to a prior work as “brilliant,” whether true or not. It should be left to the readers and to members of award committees to make such judgments.

7. The writing has an over dependence on jargon and acronyms. All the words should be chosen carefully, and jargon should be avoided. Acronyms should be use sparingly and not necessarily used to shorten the length of a paper. If they are necessary, then they should be redefined at regular intervals in the paper so that the reader does not have to continually thumb back to an earlier section to rediscover
their definitions. If a paper is written such that there are five or more acronyms in each paragraph, a natural impulse on the part of a critical reviewer would be to recommend outright rejection.

8. The writing “talks down” to the reader. This type of writing might be all right for a talk to a group of students, but is not so for the type of audience that one expects as readers of a scholarly journal.

9. The incorrect tense in used at one or more places in the paper. In the description of an experiment, the past-tense should be used. Succeeding sections should not be referred to in the future tense, but with phrasing such as “further below.”

10. The topic of the paper and the method of approach is such that an erudite reader would think that it could have been written 150 years ago and that it has either been published previously in some obscure place or else is such that no one thought it sufficiently important to have written up for publication. In such cases, the burden of proof is on the author to critically discuss a large number of older and recent references to support the supposition that the work is indeed new and timely.

11. The paper is one of a sequence of papers written by the same author(s), and one which cannot be read without the readers having first read all the preceding papers in the sequence. Readers and reviewers generally desire that a paper be stand-alone. For a sequence paper, the natural questions asked are whether the earlier papers were all that significant and whether the current one is just a trivial extension of the earlier ones. There is also the uncomfortable feeling that the author(s) are in a rut and that they intend to continue to follow-up with extensions for the rest of their professional lives.

12. The results of the paper are discernible only in the figures or tables, and only in a qualitative sense. If the authors cannot summarize their results in a few sentences or in a few concise mathematical relations, the readers and the reviewers will think that there is nothing in the paper that can be built upon.

13. The principal results of the paper are a cumbersome list of complicated mathematical relations of a monotonous nature, so that it is unlikely that any reader would ever bother to check them or to re-derive them.
14. The writing of the paper implies that the authors have an exclusive ownership to the field. This is evidenced, for example, by the absence of references to contributions by any contemporaries other than ones by the authors and their colleagues and/or inner circle. Another indication is that the concluding sections describe suggested future work in a manner that implies the field is not open to anyone who reads the present paper.

15. The paper appears to have been written to be read by the authors themselves and their immediate colleagues. Too much a demand is placed on readers outside the inner circle to become familiar with the past work and modes of thought of the authors and their colleagues.

16. The paper contains a succession of statements with unsupported assertions that a critical reader would question. Perhaps there is a belief that the readers will be unwilling to argue with the authors and will placidly agree with such assertions.

17. The paper makes extensive use of terminology from other scientific or technical fields.Unless such terminology is essential for the paper, the authors should make substantial efforts to use only terminology that would be intelligible to most readers who identify with acoustics.

18. The paper makes frequent reference to named methods and mathematical results, without giving adequate definition of what is being referred to.

Introduction

1. The introduction includes too extensive a literature review. The paper is not a review paper and the *Journal* expects the paper to deal primarily with what is the principal contribution of the paper. The introduction should set the stage for the reporting of the paper; it should not exhaustively describe all prior related work.

2. The introduction does not communicate what is the topic of the paper and why the authors believe it is significant. This should be done within the first couple of paragraphs, and if the communication is not evident, the reader will have little motivation to read the remainder of the paper.
3. The literature review in the introduction is not a truly critical evaluation of the relevant literature, but a blatant attempt to make sure that all applicable literature is cited.

4. There is very little mention of any prior work on the subject other than that done by the authors and their colleagues. This is usually interpreted as evidence that the authors are either egoists or were unwilling to familiarize themselves with and to assess prior literature.

5. The introduction is unintelligible to the typical reader. If any part of a paper should be intelligible, it would be the introduction.

Conclusions or Concluding Remarks

1. The paper does not have any tangible conclusions that can be easily identified by the readers. It is inadequate to simply say that something was studied or that some experiments were done.

2. The conclusions section of the paper reads very much like a sales brochure. The authors are excessively promoting a commercial product, a piece of software, a methodology, or a technique.

Plagiarism and Permissions

1. The manuscript contains figures and tables which have previously appeared in another publication, so that there is a suspicion of plagiarism. Such duplicate publication of figures is usually not needed, but they might be included for the sake of ease of referral on the part of the readers.

2. If previously published figures are included, there is no appropriate citation of the prior publication, or any indication that the authors have the required permissions. The citation should be included in the figure caption.

3. The manuscript contains extensive passages of text identical to what has appeared in a previous publication. Quotations are allowed, but they should be identified as such and should be relatively brief. If some discussion similar to what appeared in a previous publication
is required to adequately explain the results of the current paper, the
author(s) should give a fresh rewriting specifically tailored to the needs
of the present paper.

References

1. The selection of references and the manner in which they are cited is
likely to mislead the reader as to the priority of ideas and results. In
some cases, the reviewers and the Editor suspect that this been done
deliberately by the authors to promote themselves and their friends.

2. The authors cite a large number of references that are of peripheral
relevance to the actual substance of the paper and which would not
even be remotely considered as required background references.

3. The authors, while citing a voluminous amount of references presum-
ably to bring the readers’ attention to related work, fail to cite work
of those authors who might possibly be regarded as their competitors.
There appears to be a political bias in the selection of the references.

4. An excessive fraction of the references in the paper are to the authors
or their immediate references. A common view is that, if more than
1/3-rd of the references are self-references, the manuscript is too self-
serving and too narrow to be worth publishing.

5. The citing of the references includes no recent references to JASA. This
suggests either that (1) the authors have no made a sufficient attempt
to tie their work in with other contemporary literature, (2) JASA is
not the most appropriate journal, or (3) the work is not within the
current de facto scope of JASA. [JASA has been published papers on
acoustics for over 80 years, and it is estimated that it has published
over 30,000 articles.]

6. The citing of references suggests a lack of scholarship on the part of the
authors. There would be case if the references are only to textbooks
or to works that have had very little distribution among the acoustical
community, such as conference proceedings or institutional reports.

7. The paper references a book without stating just which pages are being
cited. Books are typically hundreds of pages long, and the reader
should not be expected to thumb through all the pages to find the
relevant passages.
8. References are cited in large blocks, without distinguishing the contributions of the individual references. Generally, the reader deserves to be given a succinct reason for a reference being cited and for why that reference deserves the reader’s attention.

**Figures**

1. The paper makes use of figures that the authors have used in previous publications, without the authors stating such in the figure captions.

2. The paper is cluttered with excessive, overly-busy, and unclear graphics. The *Journal* suggests an upper limit of 12 figures including parts.

3. Figures are used in lieu of quantitative conclusions expressed in words and mathematical equations. For the most part, a figure is not something which a reader would cite in a subsequent paper.

4. Quantitative results in figures are not displayed in a manner which is amenable to comparison with the results of subsequent experiments and/or computations.

5. The figures are not numbered in the order in which they are referred to in the paper.

6. The units in terms of which the graphical material is presented are not amply stated. If the units are given in decibels, for example, and if the measurements are absolute, the reference values must be stated.

7. The textual material in the figures is unintelligible. The authors presumably did not take sufficient care to be sure that the font size in the actual published figures at single column width would be adequate.

8. Many of the figures have multiple parts. Such figures are difficult to place within the printed manuscript and do not easily fit into either a one-column or two-column form. In some cases, such figures are necessary, but the authors should try to make them simple.

9. The authors rely extensively on the use of color in their figures. Until relatively recently, all figures in journal articles were in black and white, and the intended messages usually were gotten across adequately.
Equations

1. The first equation in the paper is suspected to be incorrect. Authors frequently obfuscate their mathematical reasoning. It is important that they leave no doubt in the reader’s mind that at least the first equation is correct.

2. Authors set down one or more equations that are unlikely to be familiar to most readers, but do not state the source of the equations.

3. Authors do not adequately define or identify the symbols that appear in their equations.

4. The physical units of the variables in the equations are not adequately defined.

5. A source for unfamiliar equations is cited, but the allusion to the source is vague or inappropriate. If the source is a lengthy article, the authors should identify just which equation in the article is being taken as the source. If any equation is a result of a derivation from some fundamental principles, then the reader should be able to quickly find that derivation in whatever reference the authors cite.

6. The authors state that a certain mathematical relation is well-known, when it would not be well-known to a typical reader.

7. In the description of a computational process, the authors give a lengthy sequence of equations detailing obvious computational steps. If no approximations are made in the process, the equations are superfluous to the actual understanding of the paper.

8. The authors fail to consider limiting cases that would tend to give credibility to the any derived mathematical results or to a complicated computational procedure.