GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWERS OF JASA EXPRESS LETTERS

PURPOSE OF JASA EXPRESS LETTERS

JASA Express Letters is devoted to rapid, open-access publication of concise letters describing new research and other timely technical communication in all fields of acoustics.

The manuscript handling procedures of JASA Express Letters follow from the principle that the advancement of acoustical science is best served, in many cases, when timely publication takes precedence over a deliberate review process enabling extensive interactions between authors, reviewers, and an editor.

JASA Express Letters must still be “truly acoustics” and meet the high standards of the Journal of the Acoustical Society of America for originality and significance.

TIMELINESS AND LENGTH OF REVIEWS

The prompt, expert advice of reviewers is important to JASA Express Letters. Reviewers are requested to finish their task within two weeks. Please notify the Manuscript Manager, jasael@aip.org, if you are unable to do so. If a review is not finished on time, it is understood that the Associate Editor may make a publication decision without the review.

Manuscripts that do not meet Journal of the Acoustical Society of America standards for readability, significance, originality, and for being “truly acoustics” should be quickly rejected. Reviews should be less than 400 words and focus on the publishability of the manuscript in its current state. Lengthier commentary generally implies that extensive revisions are necessary.

Manuscripts requiring extensive revisions should be rejected for publication in JASA Express Letters. In such a situation, reviewers may recommend to the Associate Editor that a manuscript be considered for publication in the letters section of the Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, which does not have the same strict requirements for timely processing of manuscripts and allows multiple review/revision cycles.

Reviews for JASA Express Letters must focus on the publishability of manuscripts. Only very minor revisions are allowed once a manuscript has been submitted. Reviewers may recommend that a manuscript be accepted as is, accepted after minor revisions, reconsidered by the Associate Editor after minor revisions or responses from the authors, or rejected. Since manuscripts are not substantially revised after submission, they are sent to reviewers for comment only once.

For a letter that is acceptable, please refrain from suggesting unnecessary revisions. In principle, you, the authors, and the Associate Editor are peers on an equal footing. Insisting that a letter requires extensive revision prior to publication may well result in an intrinsically good paper never being published, having its value diminished through publication delays, or being sent to another journal. Keep in mind that even minor revisions may expand a manuscript beyond the 6-page limit of JASA Express Letters. The author may have already made difficult decisions about which material to include in the letter while remaining within this limit; if, as a reviewer, you recommend additions to a letter, you may unintentionally be pressuring the author into omitting material that they consider important.

It is unnecessary in your review to point out minor grammatical and typographical errors that will be corrected by copy editors.

ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

JASA Express Letters, like other sections of the Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, prefers that all reviewers remain anonymous to the authors. All manuscripts submitted to the Journal are regarded as having been submitted by the authors “in confidence,” and reviewers are requested to try to maintain that confidentiality. Nevertheless, reviewers may use their discretion in consulting with whomever seems appropriate in the preparation of reviews.

NO SURROGATE REVIEWERS

The selection of reviewers is the responsibility of the Associate Editors, and the selection is typically made with a great amount of forethought. If, for some reason, you find it impossible to complete a review after you have initially agreed to do so, do not pass the task on to someone else. Contact the Manuscript Manager, jasael@aip.org, or Associate Editor as soon as possible. Suggestions for appropriate alternate re-
reviewers are welcome.

HOW TO SUBMIT REVIEWS

At the time you receive an e-mail request to do a review, you signify your willingness to do so by clicking on an online link. Shortly thereafter, you will receive an e-mail message from jasael@aip.org with the phrase “Review Instructions” in the title. This message will have an online link that you should click on to see what is desired for the submission of your review. Performing the click will bring you either directly to an online review form or to a personalized task page. In the latter case you click on the item “Review Manuscript.” In the online review form, one encounters a number of questions, most of which can be answered in free form to whatever length you choose. The first item, however, is a pull-down menu where you can select one of several items for your overall rating. You need not do anything with the form at each time that you view it, and you can work on it piecemeal, clicking “save as a draft” after each session of work on the form. When you are satisfied with what you have entered, you simply click on “Submit Recommendation” at the bottom of that web page.

The preferred method of communicating the details of your reviews is text-format sentences embedded in the boxes in the online form. Probably the most important box is that titled “Comments for Author.” There is also a box “Comments for the Editor”. The first of these are seen only by the authors, whereas all comments are seen by the Associate Editor. The intent is to separate out those comments which the reviewer would prefer not to be seen by the author.

As an alternative to directly typing your comments into the boxes, you can compose your comments offline using a word-processor or a text-editor, and then paste them into the boxes in the online form. Sending portions of your review as attachment files is possible, but generally discouraged. If you do so please make sure the files are pdf and that the files are such that they preserve your anonymity.

SENDING CORRESPONDENCE

When corresponding with the Manuscript Manager or an Editor about a manuscript you are reviewing, please use the "Send Manuscript Correspondence" feature listed under “Manuscript Tasks” on the main page for the manuscript. This will record the email as part of the official record for the manuscript.

UNREADABLE PAPERS

It occasionally happens that reviewers receive manuscripts that are incomprehensible, either because of poor organization or poor writing style, although the Associate Editors and/or Manuscript Manager usually screen out such papers at the outset. If you do receive such a paper, a sufficient review is simply a statement to that effect.

LENGTH OF PAPERS

JASA Express Letters are limited to six printed pages in a single-column format. This length corresponds to roughly four pages in the normal, two-column JASA format. Submissions are screened for excessive length by the Manuscript Manager prior to being sent to reviewers.

The page limitation of JASA Express Letters is helpful in encouraging authors to be concise. Nonetheless, even a short manuscript, if it lacks in substance, may suffer from a lack of conciseness. Reviewers should identify such cases to the Associate Editor.

Suggestions to add material to letters are discouraged. Experience has shown that even minor suggestions from the reviewers and AE may combine to increase the length of a manuscript past the page limit and thus greatly complicate the publication process. Reviewers must apply restraint in their recommendations.

MULTIMEDIA FILES

Authors may include multimedia content, such as video and sound clips, with their letter. Although the Manuscript Manager tests multimedia content during initial screening of the manuscript, it is critical that reviewers determine compatibility of the multimedia content with their own computer hardware/software and report any problems. Reviewers should also ascertain whether the multimedia contributes in a substantial way to the purpose of the letter, and whether video and audio quality is high. Large (more than several Mb) and very numerous multimedia files are discouraged.

BACKGROUND READING

JASA Express Letters are not required to be stand-alone manuscripts and authors are encouraged to
make appropriate citations of previously published material to avoid unnecessary duplication in their papers. If you find, however, that the acceptability of a letter cannot be determined without seeing such cited material and if this material is difficult for you to obtain, then send a message to the Manuscript Manager or Associate Editor stating what items you need and why.

THE “TRULY ACOUSTICS” CRITERION

Another occasional possibility is that reviewers receive manuscripts that are inappropriate, because of their content, for *JASA Express Letters*. Possible distinguishing characteristics of such papers include no references to previous papers in acoustics journals, no mention of acoustics or of associated terminology (e.g., speech, hearing, the ear, noise) throughout the text, an absence of scholarship, or an absence of good science in the presentation. If you decide that the paper is outside of the scope of *JASA Express Letters* for such a reason, then a statement to that effect is a sufficient review. Please refrain, however, from suggesting an alternate journal. It is the authors’ responsibility to write their papers in such a way that it is manifestly clear to the reviewers that their papers are appropriate for *JASA Express Letters*.

THE “ORIGINALITY” CRITERION

Reviewers should attempt to quickly ascertain whether the general substance of a submitted manuscript is novel. Given the extensive published literature in most of the areas of acoustics, however, this may be difficult to do. What one can do is to assess whether it is likely that the work is original and whether the authors themselves have made a thorough and conscientious effort to make their own assessment. If the reviewer has some suspicion that the work has been done before, and if the scholarship of the authors in regard to searching, reading, and comprehending prior literature appears to be deficient, then a sufficient review is to simply state that suspicion. It is not necessary for the reviewer to do the authors’ literature search for them. Instead, the authors must write their papers so that it is manifestly clear that they have done such a literature search and that they are extensively familiar with all applicable prior literature.

THE “SIGNIFICANCE” CRITERION

Usually, a reviewer will not have to read a paper through in great depth to form an opinion on the significance of a work. If you feel a paper represents a truly insignificant contribution to acoustics, then a statement to that effect is all that is required for your review. Many papers, however, fall into the gray area where they are neither truly insignificant nor highly significant. While opinions as to where a manuscript falls in the spectrum of significance are inherently subjective, reviewers are nevertheless encouraged to form such an opinion.

It is not expected that every paper published in *JASA Express Letters* be highly significant. A clearly written and informative letter whose results are of timely interest should be published. One pragmatic measure of significance is the extent that the letter is cited in future works. This is difficult to predict, but if a reviewer is almost certain that the letter will never be cited (other than by the authors themselves), then there is a real question as to whether it should be published.

ADVICE IS SOUGHT

If a manuscript survives initial scrutiny regarding readability, the “truly acoustics” criterion, originality, and significance, then your task is to write a review that advises the Associate Editor (AE) as to your reasoning for possible decisions regarding the manuscript. The AE is expected to be a disinterested person; the authors may be unable to appreciate any negative comments.

The number of reviewers used is at the discretion of the AE. Most commonly, two external reviews are sought. In some cases, the AE may decide that he or she is sufficiently knowledgeable in the material of the manuscript that no extra reviewing is necessary. Your primary role is to advise the AE. You may also attempt to advise the authors and try to convince them of your viewpoint, but this is not the primary purpose of your review.

Publication decisions are made by the AEs. They are under no obligation to concur with your recommendations or those of other reviewers. Although an AE may choose not to follow your recommendation, your opinion on a manuscript is nonetheless valued and considered. AEs endeavor to apply consistent criteria, which may differ somewhat from those of a
particular reviewer.

Communication with the authors is handled by the AE. Although the AE will typically pass reviews unedited to the authors, he/she may choose to paraphrase comments by individual reviewers, to give summary comments as to the common concerns of the reviewers, or to give edited extracts from individual reviews.

TRY TO BE IMPERSONAL

Occasionally, reviewers may feel hurt when they see their work slighted in a manuscript’s discussion of prior or related work or when they sense that some of their relevant papers are not cited in the manuscript’s bibliography. In such cases, please avoid taking advantage of your role as a reviewer. Ask yourself instead, that if someone else, someone truly disinterested and with a representative knowledge of the literature of the field, were instead the reviewer, would that someone insist on the “corrections” that you are tempted to suggest. Do not suggest that the authors add additional references simply as informational items.