

EDITORIAL BY AMS PRESIDENT AVERY ON UNPAID PAGE CHARGES

These are financially difficult times, particularly for nonprofit organizations such as the AMS. More than ever, we must depend upon subscriptions and page charges to recoup the costs associated with publishing high-quality scientific and technical journals. The Society has been proud over the past 85 years to publish all accepted peer-reviewed manuscripts in our journals without regard to the ability of the author(s) to pay any or all of the page and/or color charges associated with their papers. Unfortunately, ever-increasing numbers of scientists are relying upon AMS to publish their work while contributing only partially, or not at all, to covering production and printing expenses. As recently as 10 years ago, nonpayment of page charges amounted to roughly \$50,000 per year. In 2003, that burden exceeded \$350,000. *Keep in mind that it is authors who actually do pay their page and color charges in full that bear the financial burden of subsidizing those who do not—in the form of higher page charges.*

There are two primary factors underlying the current shortfall. First, there are a number of foreign nations (such as the United Kingdom and India) that have laws prohibiting the government funding of page charges associated with publication of scientific research results. The AMS is beginning to work with these nations to see if alternative forms of payment may be acceptable within their legal framework. We are confident that good-faith negotiations will lead to the recovery of a significant portion of the funds currently paid by AMS to publish papers from these nations. Second, there are many domestic authors (and foreign authors from nations where there is no restriction on the payment of page charges) who do not pay what they owe for papers published in AMS journals. Often, the reason given is that a grant that was to have provided funds for page charges has expired, leaving the author unable to pay.

What can be done to address a problem that has reached alarming proportions? There are no easy answers, but the following are new policies that AMS is implementing to more equitably distribute the production and printing costs of our journal articles:

- 1) Scientists can and ought to encumber funds from grants at the outset of their research to ensure that funds for publication will be available regardless of when the grant officially expires.
- 2) Department heads and program chairs will be notified when scientists on their staffs are unable to pay publication costs so that possible alternative sources of funding may be considered. The same is true of sponsoring agencies.
- 3) Papers from authors who pay their page charges will be given higher priority in terms of timely publication of their papers. Until now, unfunded papers had equal status in this regard; from this point forward their publication will be significantly delayed.

A separate problem that needs to be addressed is that of authors from developing nations who absolutely need financial assistance if their work is to be published at all. AMS is currently developing a plan that will establish a limited fund to which such authors may apply to receive partial or total relief from publication charges.

If you have any other constructive ideas about possible solutions to this problem, I would be happy to hear from you (e-mail: AMSPresident@ametsoc.org). We all have one common goal: the widest possible dissemination of important peer-reviewed research results in the atmospheric and related sciences while at the same time minimizing the costs associated with the publication process. Having everyone contribute their fair share of the costs will ensure success in this endeavor.

Susan K. Avery
AMS President