

A New Policy on Transactions Letters

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Dear Readers,

We want to inform you about some changes that will occur in the *IEEE Transactions on Communications* (TCOM) and the *IEEE Transactions on Wireless Communications* (TWireless) in the near future. The primary change is that, starting in early 2012, Letters will no longer be published in TCOM and TWireless. The aim of this editorial is to give some background and further details on this and related changes.

Traditionally, since their inception, both TCOM and TWireless have been publishing different types of manuscripts, namely, Transactions Papers and Transactions Letters. According to the stated Guidelines for Authors (as published on the relevant web sites), the difference between these two categories has to do with: (i) the amount and scope of contributions (broader and more exhaustive for Papers, compact and more focused for Letters); (ii) the specified page limits (Papers are typically allowed twice as much space as Letters); and (iii) the duration of the review process (Letters being significantly shorter and more focused, there may be an expectation that the review process for Letters is quicker than it is for Papers).

In recent years, following what many other societies had done, COMSOC has started a new periodical entirely devoted to Letters, *IEEE Communications Letters*. Its charter is to publish contributions of a strongly focused character and a crisp and concise writing style, trying to keep the review process turnaround time very short (a few weeks). The success of this periodical has shown that there is room for journals that are devoted solely to Letters, with the advantage of being specialized in this type of focused contribution and able to process submissions expeditiously.

Our experience with Letters in the Transactions has been a little different. TCOM and TWireless editors currently handle both Papers and Letters, and often the review time it takes to reach a decision is not too different for the two categories. In addition, sometimes the readers may have the perception that Letters (published in the same issue as Papers but with shorter length, slightly different typesetting, and no biographies) are just shorter and lower-quality papers. This type of interpretation, which does not correspond to the role Letters should play in the technical literature, is misleading and may actually hurt the reputation Letter contributions should enjoy among readers and authors.

For these reasons, it was felt that devoting the Transactions to publishing only full Transactions Papers, while delegating the publication of Letters to letters-only period-

icals, would serve the purpose of giving back to Letters their full stature and making their character more clear and their handling more efficient. This is actually more than a feeling, as the successful experience of *IEEE Communications Letters* has concretely shown during these past few years.

In addition to *IEEE Communications Letters*, IEEE has just approved the establishment of a new COMSOC periodical, *IEEE Wireless Communications Letters* (WCL). The new periodical will be published bi-monthly, beginning in 2012, and will have a format identical to that of *IEEE Communications Letters*, though the technical scope will obviously be more focused on wireless-related topics. The motivation behind WCL is partly to address the rapid growth in submissions and partly to match the pairing between TCOM and TWireless.

With the start of this new journal, both TCOM and TWireless will stop publishing Transactions Letters in 2012 and will only publish Transactions Papers. Effective September 1, 2011, both TCOM and TWireless will no longer take new Letter manuscripts, and authors wishing to submit short and focused contributions are invited to direct them to either *IEEE Communications Letters* or *IEEE Wireless Communications Letters*. Of course, all Letter manuscripts currently under review will be processed, with the expectation that, after a transition phase of a few months, all of them will be either published or rejected.

One possible remaining concern is the smaller size allowed in *IEEE Communications Letters* compared to what is normally accepted for Transactions Letters. Accordingly, both letters-only journals will have a page limit of four (4) published pages.

As a final note, we remark that there is in fact a third category of manuscripts in TCOM and TWireless, namely, Transactions Comments or Corrections. While rarely employed, this type of manuscript is used to make extremely specific comments on papers that were published in TCOM or TWireless, and typically serves the purpose of pointing out an error or to propose an errata corrigé. Transactions Comments or Corrections, which are very short (often less than a printed page) and cannot contain any original contribution, will be maintained.

We believe that this reorganization of the publication offerings will benefit our readers and authors alike, improving the quality of one of the most valuable services we offer to our members. We ask the help of authors and editors in making this transition as graceful as possible.