
EDITORIAL



Paul G. Roetling
Editor

"A Digital World"

We all recognize that digital systems are becoming ever more prevalent. In the case of the *Journal of Electronic Imaging*, most authors, referees, editors, and readers earn their livings through some connection to digital systems. Yet, the great majority of information related to JEI is handled on paper. For my devoted readers, who read, absorb, and retain every word of my editorials, you will remember my mentioning this fact in my editorial in the April issue. But change is coming, however slowly.

At the moment, I am sitting at home, creating this editorial on a WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) word processing program. Although this is not a DOS machine, when I finish for the evening, I will write the file in ASCII and use another program to write a DOS compatible disk. In the morning, I will read the disk with another DOS compatible program to enter the text into my UNIX-based workstation. I'll probably edit it some more, then send it by electronic mail to the managing editor, who will read it on yet another computer with another different operating system. By the time this editorial is printed in JEI, it will have passed through a myriad of different, generally only marginally compatible, computer systems. If, as expected, it makes it all the way without having to be retyped, one battle is won. [Mng. Ed.'s note: We did win this one; the original keystrokes were indeed saved.]

I chose this little example to illustrate how the lack of standards, or the multiplicity of them, complicates all our lives. We still use paper a lot, at least in part because it can be written on and read by both the sender and the receiver, regardless of what type of computer each owns. Of course, using paper as an exchange medium causes frequent reentry of data and sometimes can introduce errors. Moreover, you will note that both this issue and the previous one contain color illustrations. As mentioned in my April editorial, color carries with it additional problems that make a change to digital exchange very desirable.

We would like to encourage the transition to more digital exchanges, starting with the less difficult problem of text. JEI will accept ASCII text on floppy disks, but please do not omit a paper copy. Unfortunately, not even every ASCII system keeps all symbols the same. Moreover, floppy disks come in a variety of sizes, data densities, and formats. Somewhere out there an author will find a system that writes disks in a format we can't read! For the moment, we prefer illustrations on paper; there are simply too many digital formats to allow us to read them all.

However, just because we can't solve the problem completely does not mean we are giving up. If we can handle the formats for both text and illustrations that are most popular within the electronic imaging community, things will be much better. Therefore, we are interested in hearing from authors and potential authors about which hardware, software, and formats they have available for both their text and illustration work. The responses will give us the information we need to develop methods of handling the most popular forms.

You can contact me by paper mail or electronic mail at the addresses on the masthead. Your inputs will be appreciated.