



## What's Important?

Most of the time I enjoy assessing the papers submitted to this journal in preparation for assigning them to one of the Associate Editors. I get to see papers covering a wide range of topics, much of it quite ingenious. In some areas such as image processing, there are some things that never change: images of Lena, the cameraman, and the village that are used by many authors as references for comparison to other work. And then there are the papers that just frustrate me. They lack a clear explanation of the importance of the work that is being reported and provide no reasons why it should be of interest to the readers of *Optical Engineering*.

Consider the following paragraph. It is based on the first paragraph of a paper that was recently sent to us. I changed all the nouns and other identifying phrases to hide the identity of the author, but I have not changed the structure and intent of the sentences.

### 1 Introduction

Optical vision-enhanced head-mounted goggles (OVEHMG) is a device that is well suited for Blind As Bats (BAB) hunters. Attractive features of OVEHMG include the ability to support small-eared users, wireless operation, transparent overlays, the potential for target identification, and low cost [1]. Traditional Braille systems use either AMDT or AMDW schemes to provide content to multiple hunters. Unfortunately, AMDT and AMDW systems require the channel and power management systems. An alternative choice for goggles is a real-time GPS-locating audio alert from Google. The

audio-prompting, GPS-locating Google Alert (APGPSLGA) can operate in the dark and does not suffer from photon noise.

This preamble goes on for 500 words, one-tenth of the paper's text. Many acronyms later, the paper finally indicates what is unusual about the work and why it should be of interest to the reader, although the author states its significance weakly and provides the reader with little assistance in determining the import of the paper.

The reason these papers drive me crazy is that it takes a great deal of time to figure out if it's worth continuing the process and assigning it to an Associate Editor or declining it. I cannot fathom why some authors or groups of authors, who work so hard on their research, cannot transmit the importance their results to potential readers! Humility is not a virtue when publishing one's research.

Remember, research results are news. A paper reports new research results and should be written as a news story. As most students, at one time or another, are asked to write a news story, they are taught to place the most important facts in the first paragraph of the story—in journalism terms, the lede. The lede is not the abstract. The abstract describes the results reported in the paper as succinctly as possible for reference and search purposes, whereas the first paragraph of text in a paper states what's important and why.

Note: Authors, especially graduate students, who are members of SPIE, will find valuable tips on writing journal articles in "Making Your First Research Paper a Success," by Akhlesh Lakhtakia in the January issue of *SPIE Professional*.

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