



The July 1948 ICO delegates in front of the physics department building at Delft. The first ICO president, T. Smith of Imperial College, London, is standing in the middle. The guest, A. C. S. van Heel, is in the first row with a paper in his hand. Other participants include, from left to right, P. Fleury, G. Toraldo di Francia, J. Cojan, A. Biot, S. S. Ballard, E. Ingelstam, V. Ronchi, J. Hrdlicka, M. Francon, P. Jacquinot, A. Arnulf, A. Marechal, R. W. Ditchburn, E. H. Linfoot, R. Slansky and T. Judd.

## The History of a Journal: How the *Revue d'Optique* Became the *Journal of Optics*

John N. Howard

*Revue d'Optique* is perhaps the oldest optics journal in existence. It first appeared in January 1912 as *Revue General d'Optique et de Mechanique de Precision*. However, publication was halted prior to the First World War and the journal did not resurface until 1921.

At that point, the name was shortened to *Revue d'Optique*. The journal was jointly published by the Société de la Revue d'Optique at the Institut d'Optique in Paris and the General Syndicate of Optical and Precision Instruments; the first issue carried the date January 1922. Dr. Georges Guadot was the director of the journal.

In addition to the journal, the Société published several books on applied optics: "*Applications of Light Interference*," by Charles Fabry (1923); "*Calculations of Optical Design*," by Henri Chretien (1924, 1934, 1938); "*Photometry*," by Charles Fabry (1927); "*Optical Measurements of Spherical Surfaces*," by Albert Arnulf (1930) and "*Photometric Etalons*," by Pierre Fleury (1932).

From 1930 to 1944, the *Revue* published contributed papers, invited lectures delivered at the Institut and selected papers delivered at congresses and reunions at the Institut. In addition to regular articles, each volume contained brief reviews of optics papers appearing in other standard journals, such as *Transactions of the Optical Society, London*, or the *Journal of the Optical Society of America*.

In summer 1940, the German army threatened Paris. On June 13—the day before the first German troops marched into the city—the Institut moved its essential instruments and records to St. Cyr sur Mer (Var), a tiny hamlet on the Mediterranean coast, about halfway between Marseilles and Toulon. Some services of the Institut returned to Paris in autumn 1940; the *Revue* returned in January 1942, and the rest of the Institut by July 1943.

Unfortunately, the printing plant of the *Revue* was semi-destroyed by bombing in June 1944, paralyzing the journal for two years. By 1946, the journal was

slowly returning to normal. The 1947 volume contained 21 original articles plus about 600 brief reviews of optical papers appearing in other journals.

This volume also contained some invited papers from the October 1946 Reunions d'Opticiens held at the Institut: a paper by Frank Twyman (of Hilger and Watts) on the production of aspheric surfaces and a paper by Louis de Broglie on the formation of images in corpuscular optics. Jean Cabannes presented an appreciation of Charles Fabry, who had died December 11, 1945, and Professor Aime Cotton authored a paper on the development of optics in France. Pierre Fleury reviewed the history of the Institut d'Optique and research pursued since 1940. The 1947 volume of the *Revue* also included the minutes of the International Commission for Optics (ICO) Preparatory Meeting, held in Prague, June 2-7, 1947.

The 1948 volume of *Revue d'Optique* was a fat one at 774 pages, many of which were filled with the contributed papers from the 1946 Reunions d'Opticiens.

Most of the ICO founders had articles published in this volume: Thomas Smith, Pierre Fleury, Abraham (A.C.S.) van Heel, Andre Marechal, Albert Arnulf, Robert (R.W.) Ditchburn, Toraldo di Francia, Eligio Perucca, Charles (C.G.) Wynne, Vasco Ronchi, Maurice Francon, Jean Terrien, Albert Koenig (from Switzerland), Emil Kaspar (from Prague), and Frits Zernike—a future Nobel prize winner from the Netherlands.

In short, everybody who was anybody in European optics presented papers at the 1946 Paris conference, or at least attended. Even the 1949 volume of the *Revue* contained articles from that meeting. The 1950 and 1951 volumes included some papers from ICO 2, which was held in London in 1950. When a new journal called *Optica Acta* appeared on the scene in 1954, many ICO loyalists moved their papers to that journal, and *Revue d'Optique* returned to its former role as a French national journal that primarily contained papers related to the Institut d'Optique.

Annual volumes continued to appear until the May/June issue in 1968. After vanishing for a couple of years, the journal reappeared in January 1970 with another new name: *Nouvelle Revue d'Optique Applique*. It was published by Masson & Cie. The distinguished French optical physicist Alfred Kastler wrote an introductory editorial:

“In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Christian Huyghens, a Dutchman, wrote in French and edited in Paris—where he resided—his celebrated “*Traite de la Lumiere*,” in which he had the audacity to combat the corpuscular theory of emission of the great Newton. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Augustin Fresnel wrote on optics; and in our own 20<sup>th</sup> century Aime Cotton, Charles Fabry and Jean Cabannes. But now our ancient *Revue d'Optique* has succumbed to financial difficulties which had accumulated. How to again light the flame?”

Prof. Rene Dupeyrat of the Faculty of Science, Paris, was the editor in chief through Vol. 4, No. 2 (March/April 1973). After that, the journal got a new

“redacteur en chef:” Prof Maurice Francon of the University of Paris VI.

Volume 5 (1974) contained a lead editorial by Hendrik (H.B.G.) Casimir, president of the European Physical Society, that announced that *Nouvelle Revue d'Optique* had been selected as an approved Europhysics Journal. One of the criteria for this designation appears to be that a journal should show a certain amount of internationalism in its papers. Also in 1974, the contents page of *Nouvelle Revue d'Optique* became bilingual, with the titles of articles listed in both French and English.

In the November/December 1976 issue (Vol. 7, No. 6), Prof. Francon wrote in an editorial:

“Now, to further increase the number of readers, we need to increase the number of articles written in the English language, which is becoming the principal medium for the transmission of information in the domain of science. There is no escape from this evolution, and it is for this reason that we have decided to give an English name to this publication: *Journal of Optics* (with the subtitle *Nouvelle Revue d'Optique*). This change will be accompanied with a recommendation to the authors that they should write their articles in English.”

So, from 1977 forward, the journal has been called the *Journal of Optics*. In 1997, the Institute of Physics, an international professional society, acquired the journal from the French publishing house Masson. It remains a prominent journal in the field today.

John N. Howard (howards@gis.net) is the founding editor of *Applied Optics* and retired chief scientist of the Air Force Geophysics Laboratory.

**Correction:** In the history column in the November 2004 OPN, we misidentified Luke Biberman as the “first chair” of the Council. Although he was the chair of the 1965 OSA committee on Technical Groups—the precursor of the 1968 Council—the actual chair of the first Council was Robert Potter. We regret the error.

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