A Policy for JACM—by Gerard Salton

When the *Journal of the Association for Computing Machinery* was first issued in 1954, the intention was to make it into the definitive journal in the computer area. This in many ways it has become. Even in some of the applied areas—for example, in information retrieval—many of the articles consistently referred to over the years, and thus considered of fundamental importance, have appeared in the ACM *Journal*.

The ACM Editorial Board and the Council decided to alter the established policy by rendering the *Journal* an optional benefit to ACM members (at a token extra cost of three dollars per year) effective in 1969, reasoning that the *Journal* can now stand on its feet without being delivered to unwilling recipients. Some people have expressed the feeling that a professional journal which cannot be read from cover to cover is not worth receiving. This argument can easily be disposed of by pointing out that each issue will likely contain at least some items of interest to most readers, and that even when this is not the case, it may be useful to keep track of what other people in the field are doing.

One may ask whether it is appropriate that such a relatively large proportion of the articles appearing in the *Journal* should fall into abstract areas related to automata theory or computational mathematics. There is no easy answer. It may be that the abstract areas are particularly lively at certain times when a great many new results are generated. Conceivably it may be easier to produce a manuscript ready for publication in a theoretical area where no large scale experimentation or simulation is required in order to prove out one's theories. Alternatively, it is at least possible to argue that those authors most capable of writing publishable material or most interested in seeing their material published are also those most attracted to the theoretical areas.

Be that as it may, we will surely wish to continue publishing definitive material in automata theory and related areas. At the same time, everything possible must be done to insure equal representation to other important areas in the computer field, including software and hardware developments, programming language theory, computer applications, legal and social problems, and others.

During the last few years, the *Journal* has moved in the direction of greater decentralization. Some area editors have been appointed to deal specifically with manuscripts in certain subfields. Special departments will undoubtedly be formed in the future using as a model the existing setup for the *Communications of the ACM*. Obviously, administrative moves alone will not generate more diversification. A major effort will be made to attract important papers in all areas of computer science, including the applied areas.

While maintaining the high standards to which everyone has become accustomed, we shall continue to do our best to produce a *Journal* which appeals to all classes of readers and which few will want to miss.