Editorial

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Published online: 22 January 2021

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It is with great pleasure that I write this “end-of-year” perspective, my first as the Editor-in-Chief (EIC) for *The Journal of the Astronautical Sciences* (JASS). When I officially moved into EIC position for the JASS in January 2020, I knew fully well how big the shoes were that I had to fill on the heels of Dr. Kathleen C. Howell who served as EIC for nearly 27 years. During her long and distinguished tenure, Dr. Howell helped position the JASS as a significant scholarly publication in the astrodynamics field. Her dynamism and untiring efforts helped broaden the scope of the journal, champion new and emerging fields, and helped transition toward a fully online publication format. I look forward to building upon the strengths and impact our journal has been making upon the community. Upon my request, Dr. Howell accepted to remain with the JASS editorial team as Editor-in-Chief Emeritus so that I had the benefit of being able to tap into her invaluable guidance and sage council through the transition process.

When I accepted the invitation from AAS to be EIC for JASS, my major goals for the journal were: a) prioritizing review timeliness (from submission to final acceptance); b) improving communications and workflow among the editorial team; and c) actively exploring special topics and sections dedicated to emerging research fields in our discipline. Working with the support staff from the publisher, we made lot of process improvements such as generating automated review reminders.

In 2020, the AAS and Springer Nature have digitized additional back issues: volumes 1997 to 2005 are now available online in full-text PDF for AAS members and subscribers. The JCR impact factor for 2019 stands at 2.775 (an improvement from 1.657 during the previous year). It is my great pleasure to announce that the AAS Board approved my recommendation for starting a JASS Best Paper of the Year award. Quite fittingly, this new award will be named in the honor of our previous EIC Kathleen C. Howell recognizing her distinguished career in astrodynamics and service to our profession. The winner of this year’s JASS best paper award will be announced during the summer 2021.

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The journal's author submission guide continues to evolve, so please be sure to refer to the current files. Authors are strongly requested to review these guidelines to confirm that potential submissions are well suited for the JASS audience, and that they are written and formatted according to the required format. Authors are required to fully disclose prior publication history for their manuscripts as part of the submission cover letter.

This past year saw the publication of a special issue with 17 original contributions commemorating the John L. Junkins Dynamical Systems Symposium "Celebrating 50 Orbits of Academic Excellence," I would like to thank the Guest Editors Dr. Tarek Elgohary, Dr. Manoranjan Majji, Dr. Hanspeter Schaub, Dr. Puneet Singla, and Dr. Srinivas Vadali for their significant efforts in helping arrange the reviews for the Junkins special issue. Also this year, JASS continued its association with the Advanced Maui Optical and Space Surveillance Technologies (AMOS) Conference by publishing a special topics section that is edited by Dr. Robert Lauchie Scott and Dr. Islam Hussein. Special issues along with their accompanying introductions written by the guest editors provide a unique opportunity to present highly focused set of emerging perspectives and technical results that can be both timely and of significant value to the community. It is therefore my goal that special issues become a regular annual feature for JASS. Broad participation from both academia and the industry is strongly encouraged. I welcome those interested in organizing a special issue to email me with their ideas along with a proposed list of authors.

JASS is indeed quite fortunate to be served by a strong team of associate editors and editorial staff members. I greatly appreciate all of their hard work in support of our journal. During this past year, Dr. Yang Cheng from Mississippi State University has rotated off after providing many years of his dedicated service as associate editor for the JASS. I express deep gratitude and look forward to his continued support for the journal in other capacities. I was delighted to reappoint Dr. Carolin Frueh from Purdue University for another three-year term as an Associate Editor. Also during this past year, it was my great pleasure to welcome five new Associate Editors: Dr. Eric Butcher of the University of Arizona, Dr. Kyle DeMars from the Texas A&M University, Dr. Jennifer Hudson from Western Michigan University, Dr. Martin Ozimek from the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory, and Dr. Powtawche Valerino from the NASA Marshall Space Flight Center. All these new editors made an excellent start and have adjusted well to our journal's workflow. Additionally, it is with great excitement that effective January 1, 2021, we are welcoming four more Associate Editors to our editorial team: Dr. Camilla Colombo from Politecnico di Milano, Dr. Arnaud Boutonnet from the European Space Agency, Dr. Steve Ulrich from Carleton University, and Dr. Richard Linares from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I find great satisfaction that our expanded editorial team brings significant technical expertise to cover the full scope of our journal but importantly, they represent a much improved balance from gender, geographic, and ethnic diversity considerations to better represent our JASS community.

My special thanks goes to all the JASS reviewers. While their service is voluntary, it is only through their invaluable efforts that our journal maintains its capacity for high-quality publication standards. Accordingly, I continue to urge all members of the JASS community and especially those who have recently authored papers published by the

journal to continue their assistance by accepting reviewer invitations when requested by our editorial team.

With the current COVID-19 pandemic, things have shaped quite a bit differently across the world this past year. One thing however has not changed: the shared commitment of our entire JASS community – authors, reviewers, and editors alike toward enhancing humanity’s understanding of astronautical sciences and technology. I wish everyone a great start to the year 2021. I fully expect that you will continue enjoying the high-quality papers published in the JASS. As always, I look forward to your feedback.

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