Newsletter to serve practicing engineers?

I am an avid reader of Computer magazine, IEEE Transactions of Software Engineering and, recently, IEEE Software magazine. I depend entirely on these publications to keep me up to date in my field. In the last several months, I have become concerned about the quality and the academic bias of the material that seems to be creeping into these publications. However, I do not want to criticize the publications board, because I believe it does an outstanding job of performing a very difficult task.

I believe that the system used to select the material for the IEEE Computer Society publications is intrinsically deficient. I feel that the publications do not serve the practicing engineer in industry as well as they could. The system tends to favor the academic community, which is already served by the publications of the ACM. The selection of articles tends to favor the polished academic writers rather than the practicing engineer who infrequently writes for publications and whose material is not necessarily polished, is often incomplete, and usually reflects tight industrial schedules and the priorities of profit-making. Yet, this material is most important to the practicing engineer, and the IEEE Computer Society publications should focus on bringing selected parts of this material to the attention of persons like myself. The system for selecting publication material now in use does not serve that purpose well.

I have a suggestion which I think would better serve the bulk of the readership of the IEEE Computer Society publications:

I suggest that all materials submitted to the IEEE Computer Society for publication be immediately published in the form received in a technically specialized newsletter. Newsletters should be minimum cost and contain a response form soliciting reader interest and comments on technical quality. Those who are interested in the technical specialty may take the newsletter and act as reviewers by returning the response form. The results of the response including technical comments should be published in the newsletter. An index to all newsletter articles and responses should be published annually, possibly in Computer magazine.

Based on the responses received, the publication board should select articles of interest to the readership and encourage the authors to polish up or rewrite their article for final publication in a magazine or one of the transactions. A letter from an IEEE publication editor saying that an article had been selected for publication but needed rework would have a profound effect on an author in industry.

While his management would not usually support his writing of articles for publication at company expense, working on an article that had already been selected for publication would open up resources to the author that would otherwise be unavailable. This is a key element in getting articles from, and of interest to, a wide segment of industry.

Continued on p. 5