

Editorial

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In the final issue of volume 1, it seems fitting to attempt a review and evaluation of the journal's progress over the past year.

The usual format for an evaluation is to compare the attainment with the objectives. However, the objectives stated in issue 1 seem relatively vague when compared with some that have been expressed by readers, reviewers, and editors!

The objectives stated in issue 1 were (1) to provide a national forum for the exchange of ideas between people involved in Canadian education, and (2) to provide a means of communication between the various associations of the CSSE/SCEE. These are worthy goals; but their attainment depends, to a great extent, on their interpretation by reviewers of contributed papers (and those who evaluate the journal). Another way of approaching an evaluation may be to ask, "Has the existence of the CJE/RCE made any difference?" — in the crowded field of journals of education. For authors, the answer is probably yes, since well over one hundred manuscripts have been received in less than eighteen months. With respect to readers, the answer (if we knew it) would be meaningful, but it is also very difficult to obtain. Part of the difficulty lies in knowing our audience, and part in ascertaining the impact of the journal, if any, on them.

The largest segment of our current audience is composed of CSSE/SCEE members, who belong to one or more of the co-operating associations. In selecting papers for publication we have attempted, through the selection of reviewers, to facilitate inter-association communication. Each association editor is asked to read abstracts of articles received and to suggest reviewers for each article (usually from among members of his association). If possible, three reviewers are selected in such a way that each is suggested by a different editor. This procedure is intended to insure that each article is evaluated by two different kinds of reviewers, at least one representing the "discipline" (association members) from which the paper comes and at least one from outside the discipline, representing "general readers" (members of other associations). In practice, this ideal is difficult to attain, as association editors may be more familiar with colleagues from their own institutions than from the associations they represent.

In order to be accepted for publication a manuscript should generate a

“yes” response to two questions: “Is it worth writing?” and “Is it worth reading?” Papers can be rejected or revisions called for as a result of an unfavorable response to either of these questions. (This is the point at which a reviewer’s understanding of the goals of the journal, mentioned above, shapes the content of the journal.)

One result of this type of review procedure is that we are unlikely to print articles that are addressed to a particular specialist group. By the same token, we are unlikely to present an article that is “doctrinally impure” in terms of the discipline from which it comes. Thus we seem to be aiming at a rather general audience, which could include a fair number of “practitioners” (those who take offense at this word may substitute “scholars in the field”).

Three of the articles in this issue are illustrative of the effect of our review procedure. The article by Dr. Kazepides was accepted without reservation by two reviewers, while John McLeish, an association editor, felt the presentation would be incomplete without a response, which he volunteered to write. The success of the result should be judged by the number of people who are willing and able to read both the approaches to the continuing discussion of behaviorism.

The article by Pat Cranton is a revision of a previous manuscript which was judged by reviewers as “too technical.” The result is an introductory article which may be lower on the scale of “scholarly importance” (and therefore, in the view of some readers, inappropriate for this journal) but has greater “reader interest” as a compensating factor.

It appears, then, that our present definition of an “important article” is based on quantity as well as quality. Not only are we concerned with quality as measured in a peer review, but also with the quantity and quality of the people who will read the article with interest.

Doubtless the definition of “articles appropriate for the CJE/RCE” will continue to evolve. Articles that readers use in their own research and writing, or in graduate and undergraduate instruction, all serve a useful purpose. Readers who have preference for certain types of articles should communicate these preferences to their association editor, or to the editor-in-chief. Several readers have already made excellent suggestions. I hope that more of you will take an active part in trying to improve our professional communications.