

EDITORIAL

Editors of professional journals frequently bemoan the overwhelming dominance of academic authors and the relative paucity of practitioners who succumb to the writer's calling. Indeed, an editorial in this very journal made such a point back in March 1984 (Volume 2, Number 1). This problem is not too surprising, of course. Those of us in academe, it can be argued with justice, have both the time and the motivation to write. Our employers expect us to publish and in many cases this is a contractual requirement: quantity, if not quality, must be forthcoming.

For better or worse, then, many journals are primarily dependent upon authors from higher education, and this has certainly been true of *Education for information*. Without these authors the journals would be largely empty. Academics are not only writers: they are also readers and for many journals they probably constitute a majority of the readership. Academics writing for other academics, as the saying goes.

The role as author presently seems more secure than the role as reader. Despite proclaimed difficulties in the publishing industry, new journal titles (often dealing with increasingly specialized areas) continue to appear with alarming rapidity: in 1988, for example, over 5,000 new journals entered the arena. Other journals fall by the wayside, of course, but overall the determined author has a good chance of ultimate success. This very success is posing difficulties for readers. The bibliographic problems of identifying relevant articles from among the mass of potential articles in even the most esoteric of subjects are well-known to readers of this particular journal. Increasingly, however, academic readers (and presumably other categories) are facing another problem: university libraries cannot stretch their budgets to keep pace either with the flood of new journal titles or the price increases of existing ones. Even the libraries of universities with renowned international reputations are feeling the economic bite.

Many scholarly journals do not pay their authors; academic authors are paid by their employers, the institutions of higher education, and write articles as a part of their job. Yet the libraries which are funded by these same institutions and which the authors, as readers, must use for teaching, research and, of course, publication, cannot necessarily afford the journals for which their members have written. It is an interesting, perhaps unique, paradox that universities pay their employees to write articles which they then must buy back for the library.

Journal editors are well placed to see the problems from all sides: publisher, author and reader. They must appreciate commercial and financial realities as well as seek to maximize distribution and quality. The problems are not new but

they are now both more pronounced and better appreciated than before. Solutions will be difficult but they must be pursued with good sense and goodwill by all parties if the present pattern of scholarly publishing is to flourish.

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