Editorial

Excellence is a matter of doing many small things well. (Thompson, 1996, p. 29)

Did you ever agree to a job and wonder what possibly prepared you to carry it forward? You make the decision for proximal reasons, perhaps hubris, without thinking through all the skills you might need. A brief period of self-satisfaction is followed by panic as you realize that the coordinated ease of your predecessors resulted from many repertoires honed from practice that you have not experienced. You then cast about for ways to get out of the agreement, but recognize that this is impossible; the very contingencies that produced the decision still exist and are strengthened by additional consequences. You settle down and get on with the job. You take the first step and the second and, there, the job is being done. Whether done well or not is to be determined, but you do it. As one of a seemingly endless series of such decisions, I have gratefully agreed to edit *The Behavior Analyst* for the next three volumes.

Previous editors have started their tenure with an editorial outlining their goals, and this is a good practice. My goal agrees with theirs and is straightforward: I want this journal to make a difference. The difference might be momentary, like reading a well-turned phrase, or more lasting, like deciding how to reframe data just collected, but reading *The Behavior Analyst* should matter.

Achieving such a highfalutin goal is not simple, but it has been accomplished from time to time during the history of the journal. How do I know this? Because there are certain articles that are cited repeatedly in our literature. The primary measure for a journal, besides circulation, is citation, and we, the Association for Behavior Analysis, will know that we have a journal

that makes a difference when people cite from it frequently. This is how we will know whether we are meeting the goals of previous editors, for example, "to illustrate the breadth and depth of contributions behavior analysts can make" and "to reach our colleagues and constituents who are not yet behavior analysts" (Moore, 1992, p. 1), or "to challenge our thinking as we move forward in our understanding of behavior" (Vaughan, 1994, p. 1), or that our authors "consider the broadest potential audience for their writing" (Bernstein, 1997, p. 1). We just have to figure out how to consistently publish articles that matter.

Reaching this goal starts with the management of the manuscripts submitted to the journal. We need to attract the best manuscripts from those who are interested in writing about behavior analysis. We cannot do this unless we provide more timely feedback to authors and potential authors. A recent spoof on behavioral journals at the Association for Behavior Analysis Follies named *TBA* the journal of *Takes Bloody Ages* (Barnes-Holmes & Roche, 1998). Funny as this was in the follies, its humor was based on a sad truth, that people wait too long for decisions from this journal. I have manuscripts in my files that were submitted in 1997 that still have not had editorial closure! I have waited a year for feedback on my own manuscripts. An immediate objective is to ameliorate this problem. To this end, much of the reviewing process was made electronic under Dan Bernstein's direction, and continued progress in this area is promising. This journal is very close to adopting a complete electronic process for most submissions.

This is not enough, however, because the biggest potential for improvement probably lies in the time-

management skills of editors and reviewers. Good time management is helped by reminders, analysis of the job into small bits, automation of iterative bits, and data. For example, I know from the past year's editing that it usually takes me 1 week to finish an action letter once I have all the reviews and I begin reading the manuscript. This includes reading the manuscript, reading the reviews, abstracting the reviewers' critical points, writing an action letter, preparing the finished draft of the letter, copying, writing notes to the reviewers, and mailing. This piece of information suggests that I cannot write the action letters for all submissions unless I also produce an average of one action letter per week (the journal receives between 40 and 50 manuscripts per year). Because my other responsibilities limit my average to one manuscript every 2 weeks, I need an associate to handle at least half of the submissions.

Armed with this knowledge, I have asked Carol Pilgrim to be the associate editor, and she has graciously accepted. Carol is a perfect choice for this position. Her background as an experimental and applied behavior analyst as well as her service to behavior analysis through the Association for Behavior Analysis Council are exemplary. Her editorial experience is vast, having been a member of the board for this journal and the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior (JEAB)* as well as associate editor of *JEAB*. I know that Carol's editing is precise, constructive, and timely. I have worked with her as an author submitting a manuscript, as a reviewer for manuscripts she is editing, and as an action editor for manuscripts she has reviewed. Carol is a very busy behavior analyst with many opportunities to apply her talents; therefore, we are very fortunate to have someone of her caliber accept the responsibilities of associate editor.

Selecting an excellent associate is not enough either. My time has to be managed so that I can produce an ac-

tion letter at least every other week. To do this I have placed in my queue of activities one complete morning a week to review and write action letters. I have adapted the automated procedures developed by editors of *JEAB* for iterative actions (Dan Bernstein started this, but Andy Lattal and Mike Perone have added their suggestions). I have scheduled time at least twice a week to complete the letters and reviews. I also keep a log of whether I keep to this schedule. I find that if I do not keep a log, I get further behind. Being behind has usually been a sufficiently aversive consequence to keep me on task. But not always, and particularly not when I get so far behind that deviations in my schedule become less effective consequences. This seems to me the heart of the problem for many editors and reviewers. You get behind, the consequences for making progress become less and less effective, and you get further and further behind. When this is compounded by competing contingencies for multiple behaviors, the results can be disastrous. How to change this basic relation is tough. I welcome suggestions from those of you who manage your time well.

In addition to the timely management of manuscripts submitted to the journal, getting the best manuscripts also requires giving worthwhile feedback to these authors. Our editors and reviewers have provided detailed constructive comments that invariably improve what the authors have to write. I have received feedback from other journals that was more perfunctory; a few words of praise or damnation, and a decision. I am sure these short reviews reduce delays in the process, but no one wants our editorial staff to give less detailed feedback. The quality of feedback has been high in the past, and the quality of the finished articles remains high. I am not sure we can do any better in this regard, so my objective is to try to maintain the standards met by previous editors.

The kinds of manuscripts submitted

will also determine whether they matter. As my predecessors have done, I wish to encourage a wide range of interpretative analyses, for example, literature reviews. Literature reviews, especially those written for a broad audience, are important. They can be used in courses, they can be given to colleagues who may wish to know more about behavioral research, they help theoretical development (particularly the kind of theoretical development behavior analysts favor—explanations of observations that are made at the same level of analysis as the observation; Skinner, 1950), and good reviews are widely cited. Literature reviews should be very attractive to those who are just starting their professional careers, because they provide an outlet for the all the library research that often goes into introductory chapters of theses and dissertations.

I also would like to encourage scholarship that falls between the cracks of the primary experimental journals of behavior analysis, *JEAB* and the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*. There are many topics of behavioral scholarship that have not been and may never be worked out sufficiently to allow experimental analyses. For these topics, behavior analysts need to use interpretations, correlations, case studies, and other methods. For behavior analysts who use nonexperimental strategies and tactics to gain knowledge about the world, *The Behavior Analyst* provides a vehicle for reporting their findings. This means that this journal *will publish data*; its statement of purpose (see Instructions for Contributors) simply suggests that experimental manuscripts be submitted elsewhere. Because experimental manipulation lies on a continuum, data that may have been collected under quasi-experimental conditions also may be appropriate for this journal. The editorial board will ultimately decide whether the reported data would be better submitted to an experimental journal, but authors should not hesitate to submit data-based articles.

I also encourage book reviews. There are many books on behavior analysis and topics of interest to behavior analysts that should be brought to the attention of the field through book reviews. As editor I receive some of these books and will list them annually. Occasionally we try to solicit book reviews. For the most part, however, the reviews are suggested by the review authors. I hope the annual list of books received will prompt potential authors to contact me with ideas for reviewing these and other books.

Let me encourage you, all of you, to take a little responsibility for making this journal matter. The field of behavior analysis has always been dynamic, but it seems to be entering a truly exciting phase of development. Closely allied fields like social work, neuroscience, child development, evolutionary biology, education, and dynamic systems theory are influencing behavior analysts. Research methods used by behavior analysts continue to expand as we recognize how inferential statistics can be used to answer some of our questions and yet improve the rigor of intrasubject designs. Much of this development is interpretive, not experimental, and should be brought to the attention of the rest of behavior analysis through this journal. Much of this development could influence these allied fields as well if we have publications that matter to them. I hope you will submit manuscripts to *The Behavior Analyst* on these and other exciting topics. I hope you will work with your colleagues to recognize how these topics matter. And I promise to improve the management of your submissions.

Philip N. Chase
Editor

REFERENCES

- Barnes-Holmes, D., & Roche, B. (1998). Presented at Association for Behavior Analysis Follicies, Orlando, FL.
- Bernstein, D. J. (1997). Editorial. *The Behavior Analyst*, 20, 1-2.

- Moore, J. (1992). Editorial: The function of journals. *The Behavior Analyst*, 15, 1.
- Skinner, B. F. (1950). Are theories of learning necessary? *Psychological Review*, 57, 193–216.
- Thompson, E. K. (1996, December). Quoted in *The Smithsonian*, p. 29.
- Vaughan, M. (1994). Editorial. *The Behavior Analyst*, 17, 1.