FROM THE EDITOR

The Operational Research Society, 40 years old this year, is a thriving and energetic organization concerned with furthering the development and growth of operational research (OR). A major asset of the Society is its Journal. This has an extensive circulation and enjoys a high reputation in international academic circles. Why, then, has the Society decided to launch a new, additional periodical?

The basic arguments are to be found in the Report of the Commission on the Future Practice of OR, published in the Journal in September 1986. Members of the Society will recall that the Commission was established by the Council of the Society to consider how the Society could do more to help and support OR practitioners. The Commission found that few practitioners consider the contents of the Journal to be of much interest or use to them in their jobs. The common perception is of the Journal as a means for academics to publish and to communicate with each other. Moreover, many practitioners feel that the Journal misrepresents OR as a mathematical, or at least somewhat abstract and non-pragmatic, subject. This is in spite of the Editor of the Journal himself being a practitioner, and in spite of an editorial policy which is unashamedly biased towards the publication of good, practical case studies. Furthermore, a recent survey of practitioners in 500 of the largest US industrial corporations suggests that a similar problem exists on the other side of the Atlantic (Bradbard *et al.*, 1987).

In the light of these observations, one of the Commission's recommendations was that the Society should develop a magazine with the primary objective of producing easily readable material on developments of interest to practitioners. This would also serve to publicize OR to a wider readership, specifically managers in all types of organizations, who would then have an opportunity to find out more about OR and what it has to offer.

OR Insight is the Society's response to this recommendation. It will differ from the Journal in a number of important respects. First, the main criterion for the acceptance of articles will be their potential interest to practitioners. Unlike the Journal, *OR Insight* will not be a vehicle for theory development. It will, however, seek to bring theoretical developments to the attention of practitioners in a manner that illustrates their practical significance. Given the extensive variety of issues addressed, and methodologies employed in OR interventions, this implies concern with a correspondingly wide range of management topics. Originality will not be a requirement for publication; the Editor will consider any interesting and relevant material that has been published elsewhere, subject to permission to use it being forthcoming. In particular, articles based on papers which have been published previously in the (so-called) academic literature may be a fruitful source of copy. The article entitled "*Evaluating Sales Promotions*" by Peter Doyle and John Saunders in this issue is an example, being a shortened version of a paper which has appeared in the OR Society's Journal. Other suitable papers from the Journal will appear in revised form in later issues. However, as readers will see from this issue, original contributions are equally welcome!

As the foregoing comments illustrate, it can be convenient to distinguish between two groups of management scientist: namely 'academics' and 'practitioners'. This terminology differentiates between those employed in educational establishments and those employed elsewhere. In some ways, however, this distinction is unfortunate. It tends to bolster the popular myth that, while practitioners apply OR in the real world, academics neither apply OR nor appreciate the complex nature of real management problems. On perusing most management science journals, one could be forgiven for subscribing to this view. However, the view is hardly justifiable when one notes that most case studies published in the Journal of the OR Society are written by academics. The distribution is further blurred by the implications of having a practitioner as Editor of the Journal, and an academic as Editor of *OR Insight*! Nevertheless, there can be significant differences of perspective between academic and practitioner. But as Robert Dyson argues in our first article, there is scope for developing OR by exploiting the interface between academic and practitioner.

One essential difference between the practitioner and the academic is that practitioners are full-time management consultants while academics are primarily teachers and researchers who spend only a portion of their time (if any) acting directly as management consultants. A consequent difference is that publishing articles is perceived as an important activity for the academic but not for the practitioner. This is a pity, because the experience of practitioners is an essential input in understanding and developing the practice of OR. It is the Editor's fond hope that the nature, and the relatively flexible and informal style, of *OR Insight* will encourage practitioners to contribute their ideas and experiences for the benefit of the wider OR community. Certainly, practitioners will not be blameless if *OR Insight* fails to live up to their expectations!

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Reference:

Bradbard, D.A., Ford, F.N., Cox, J.F. and Ledbetter, W.N. (1987): "**The Management Science/Operational Research Industrial-Academic Interface**", *Interfaces* Vol. 17, No. 2 (March-April), pp. 39-48.