Letters to the Editor

One of the most tedious types of Letter to the Editor in any journal is the one which follows up an earlier review of available products by saying "Why did you omit my product?". And the article on "**Segmenting the simulation software market**" by Van Breedam, Raes and van de Velde (*OR Insight* Vol. 2, No. 2) means that I have to write such a letter to you. I apologise for adding to your tedium, but this is a rather special case.

For P-E International is *not* a small, recently-formed partnership with one brand-new product, overlooked because nobody knew it existed. Its Modelling and Logistics Division, now headed by Jan Szymankiewicz, created HOCUS in 1967. We have been using it in consultancy work, developing its facilities and offering it for sale ever since. We have been supplying it at greatly discounted prices to educational institutions for many years. Many of your readers have experience of it.

It is possible that the paper's authors were completely unaware of HOCUS's existence. However, a simple literature search on the word "simulation" should throw up Poole and Szymankiewicz *Using Simulation to Solve Problems* (McGraw-Hill, 1977), if not the much-revised new edition by Szymankiewicz, McDonald and Turner *Solving Business Problems by Simulation* (McGraw-Hill, 1989). Both books mention HOCUS from time to time...

However, we do feel that before publication you could have questioned the article's lack of any reference to HOCUS. It is a well-established simulation system, based firmly on the principles laid down by Tocher in *The Art of Simulation*. I realize that it cannot now be added to the questionnaire issued by the article's authors; but here, for what it is worth, is our own estimation of HOCUS, on scales of 0–5, against each of the criteria used in the article:

FLEXIBILITY — 5

(if you can simulate it at all, you can do it with HOCUS)

LEARNING TIME — 5

(a one-week training course)

RUN-TIME OBSERVATION — 5

(outperforms every other system)

RUN-TIME ALTERATIONS — 4

(some logic alterations are easier outside run-time)

STATISTICS — 4

(has no multiple-regression facility)

DATA INPUT/OUTPUT FACILITIES — 4

(facilities for I/O limited to numeric data)

ON-LINE ANALYSIS — 5

(but see Alison Cole's paper at the 1989 OR Conference)

ANIMATION — 5

(and our icons move across backgrounds of any colour)

CUSTOMER SUPPORT — 5

(ask the HOCUS User Group: Jane Russell answers our 'phone)

LITERATURE — 5

(even if you disallow Jan's book)

PRICE — 2

(why didn't they use value-for-money?)

I think that puts HOCUS in a cluster of its own.

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