Editorial: 'Ten years on'

This issue completes the tenth volume of OR Insight and is my last issue as Editor. It therefore seems appropriate to reflect on past experience of producing OR Insight, and offer some food for thought to my successor, Roy Johnston of the Warwick Business School.

The objectives of OR Insight, are set out inside the front cover of every issue. How far OR Insight has succeeded in achieving these objectives is perhaps debateable. However, most would probably agree that Insight has been meeting a need both amongst academics and practitioners for readable articles of an applied nature. A survey of OR Society members in 1995 suggested that OR Insight was read more than the Society's Journal by members, although not as much as the Newsletter. Certainly OR Insight has proved to be an invaluable source of readings and case material for teaching purposes.

Obviously, a central influence on the scope and quality of OR Insight has been the nature of articles submitted for publication. When OR Insight was first proposed, one concern was whether it would be possible to obtain a sufficient flow of contributions to sustain publication. Recognising this, editorial policy has always been to encourage submissions of a practical nature, and where appropriate, to help authors to develop their work into a form suitable for publication. This policy has been reflected in the relatively high proportion of submissions ultimately accepted for publication. Associate Editors have also played an important role in soliciting articles and helping authors to develop their ideas into a form suitable for publication.

Perhaps inevitably, the majority of articles appearing in OR Insight have been written by academics, although such articles are often case study based and co-authored by 'practitioners'. About a third of articles published over the past ten years have been written wholly by practitioners, although relatively few have appeared in the last two years. Let us hope that this is not a permanent trend.

For academic authors at least, an increasingly important consideration is the lead-time between initial submission of an article and its publication. Lead-times for volumes 9 and 10 of OR Insight averaged about nine and five months respectively. Bearing in mind that most submissions require some

revisions before being acceptable for publication, these are quite short lead-times. Articles requiring little or no revision can be published within three months of submission. One reason for these short lead-times is a very small backlog of articles. This has made the Editor's job somewhat nerve-wracking at times, as publication deadlines have approached, but this has seemed a small price to pay for keeping lead-times down. An interesting feature of this one queue/single server system has been its relative stability with 32 page issues. Another curious feature has been the persistent existence of feasible solutions to the 'issue packing' problem. With a fixed capacity and only five or six articles to 'pack' it has always proved possible to efficiently 'pack' each issue, often with only one feasible solution which retains preferred odd or even page starts for certain articles. I trust this run of good luck will continue for my successor!

Of course, the Editor's work only progresses things so far. Much depends on the quality of the production process whereby articles are formatted and issues compiled in final proof form for printing. I would like to record here my very grateful thanks to Christine Faulkner for her cheerful and conscientious efforts in the Society's Production Unit, often in the face of tight deadlines and always under pressure of work related to the Society's other regular publications.

Ultimately, though, the success of any publication depends on its contributors. In the past ten years we have published over two hundred articles, and I am grateful to all those contributors, particularly those who put up with my ubiquitous red pen, sometimes coming back for more with further submissions! While we have published many interesting articles, more can be done I am sure, to enhance OR Insight's value to readers. I am very conscious that the format of OR Insight has been largely unchanged since its inception, and that it is high time a new hand was on the helm. Consequently, I am very pleased that Roy Johnston has agreed to take over the job of Editor, and I wish him every success.

Stephen Ward