Editorial

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When this journal was launched in January of 1964, your editor took the first two pages to explain why we were starting a new journal and what we expected to accomplish. Our purpose, as stated then, was to establish a medium for the "rapid publication of brief research reports in experimental psychology." We hoped to do this with a modest page budget of 400 each year. Now, four years, ten volumes, and 4400 pages later, it seems like a good time to take a look both backward and forward, to see where we have come and where we hope to go in the future.

Growth of the Journal

Certainly the need for the kind of journal we envisaged was there. After the usual wait-and-see period of a few months that is typical of the attitudes of potential contributors and subscribers toward a new journal, manuscripts began flowing into the editorial office at an encouraging pace. The first year we published 208 articles, slightly exceeding our budget of 200 articles (400 pages). So far, so good. But the pace began to accelerate and by the spring of the second year it had reached such a momentum that we felt obliged to publish two volumes, instead of one, even though we had charged our subscribers for one. That year we did 976 pages, took quite a financial loss, but felt this was necessary in order to fulfill our objective of prompt publication.

Going into the third year, we felt we could predict more accurately the pace of manuscripts and budgeted 1200 pages distributed over three volumes. That year we came closer, for we ended up publishing 1428 pages. In the fourth year (1967), however, things got somewhat out of hand, for we published 1620 pages when only 1200 were budgeted.

Editorial Review

Throughout these early years, the editor had read all papers coming in, and had rejected papers that seemed to fall short of reasonable editorial standards. As he entered the fourth year, he felt that he could hold the publication rate at 1200 pages and three volumes by obtaining outside editorial help in the evaluation of papers; such help would inevitably increase the rejection rate. To do this, he employed the usual procedure of our sister journals, namely, that of sending articles out for review to two or more handpicked consultants. Because our papers are short, he hoped to avoid in part the usual difficulties with such a procedure, which are (1) long delays in obtaining reviews, and (2) inconsistent and conflicting (unreliable) advice from reviewers.

Perhaps we did better than journals publishing longer papers, but not well enough to suit our purpose of "prompt" publication. Moreover, the editorial and administrative burden of handling papers in this way tends to be proportional to the number of *papers* rather than to the number of *pages* being reviewed, and we are now receiving papers at the rate of about 1000 a year—probably more than any other journal in the field. The clerical job of keeping track of 100 or so papers out at one time to 200 or so reviewers, and then the editorial job of trying to make sense of what reviewers say is mountainous. So, though we have been sending out many papers for review, only about one-third can be handled in this way. The rest have been evaluated either on the basis of the reputation and responsibility of the author(s) or have been read by the editor and judged by their apparent soundness and significance.

Your editor feels that the objective of brief, prompt publication is worth some sacrifices both in the editorial standards and in the elegance of the printed product. Apparently many colleagues with whom he has talked, as well as subscribers and authors, feel the same way. On the other hand, he feels that there must be some more valid and economical way of evaluating manuscripts, particularly of the sort we publish, than the traditional one of corresponding with handpicked reviewers. A number of different plans have been considered, and we have finally come up with one we think worth trying.

Panel Reviewing

The plan consists of submitting groups of abstracts to large panels of consultants who will volunteer, we hope, to review promptly papers that interest them. We are assembling panels now of 40 to 50 consultants in each of four major areas: (1) perception and performance, (2) human learning and thinking, (3) physiological psychology, and (4) comparative psychology. Every one to two weeks, each panel will receive in its subject area a couple of pages of abstracts. (Authors will receive a copy of this as an acknowledgement of receipt of their papers and notice that it is under review.) Each panel member may request, on a standard form, the full text of any paper(s) he is prepared to review within one week of receipt. These reviews, or lack of them, will then be the basis for editorial decision.

To put such a plan fully into effect at one time would disrupt the flow of manuscripts to the printer and therefore our production schedules. Since, however, we are now going into the period of the

year that yields the highest manuscript input, we can implement the plan gradually over the next few months. In this way, too, we may see whether we encounter any particular difficulties and, if so, can modify our procedures before being fully committed. We hope this turns out to be a "better way," and that we can improve the editorial quality of the journal while still providing reasonably prompt publication.

If the plan works well enough to reject, on valid grounds, a sizable number of manuscripts, it will, together with other changes described below, enable us to stay both this year and next within our page budget of 1600 (four volumes a year). If not, we shall have to consider other alternatives: increasing the lag, increasing subscription rates to cover additional editorial expenses, or splitting the journal into two or more different journals.

New Composing Equipment

To change the subject slightly, I wish to alert you to a change in format that will be seen in the next number, which will be the first issue of Volume XI. The change will yield more words (40 to 50 per cent more) to the page than heretofore. This change will enable us to print more articles—many articles, after we work off a backlog of longer articles, will be limited to one page—and also somewhat longer articles than before. This will save on printing costs. Composition costs, on the other hand, will go up both because the new equipment on which composing will be done is costly and because these costs are generally proportional to the total number of words. Consequently, there will be a new scale of reprint costs which must, at present subscription rates, cover some of the costs of composition.

The machinery to be used for composition is the new IBM Selectric Composer system being delivered for the first time since January of this year. (For those who are interested, the system is described in a series of articles in the *IBM Journal of Research and Development*, 1968, 12, (1), 2-91.) A typist types manuscript on what appears to be an ordinary Selectric typewriter, but she is at the same time making a magnetic tape. This tape is "read out" on a computer-operated variable spacing typewriter according to instructions given it for margins, spacing, justification, stopping, etc. Any one of many type

styles may be used simply by changing the Selectric "flying ball." The final camera-ready product is practically indistinguishable from the linotype printing to which we are accustomed in our books and other journals. The system has many unusual capabilities, but this description gives the general idea. It will enable us to compose more quickly, to mix type more easily, and to have more flexibility in our design of articles than is permitted by Friden Justewriter and VariTyper used up to this time. In the long run, the new system will economize considerably on composition costs, but because of initial cost of the equipment and training time, it will be some time before any savings are realized in this department.

Ownership by the Psychonomic Society

One final bit of information. Those of you who attended the business meeting of the Psychonomic Society in October, 1967, already know it. It is that the Psychonomic Journals, which include this one, *Perception & Psychophysics* and *Psychonomic Monograph Supplements*, are now operated under the aegis of the Psychonomic Society, Inc. and are now strictly a non-profit operation. The Board of the Society, backed by the membership, voted to accept a gift of the assets and ownership of the journals effective January 1, 1968. This transfer has been effected. It further voted to establish a separate corporation to be called Psychonomic Journals, Inc. to take full editorial and financial responsibility for running the journals, thus freeing the membership of the Society from such responsibility. The establishment of such a corporation is now, and has been since last fall, in legal channels, but these move very slowly, and it will probably be a few months more before it is accomplished. In the meantime, a Board of Directors is being formed. So far, the following have accepted appointment: C. N. Cofer, University of Maryland; Richard Herrnstein, Harvard University; W. J. McGill, University of California, San Diego; A. W. Melton, University of Michigan; Richard F. Thompson, University of California, Irvine. A sixth member remains to be named. In this new organization, the present editor will become Editor-in-Chief and chief executive officer. The organization is charged with being alert to the needs of experimental psychology for prompt and economical publication.