

## Editorial

I am delighted to be the new editor of *Memory & Cognition*. I am also delighted that Peter Graf, Robert Greene, David Irwin, Robert Lorch, Thomas Ward, and John Wixted are joining me as Associate Editors.

My vision of the journal concurs with the vision expressed by a stellar lineage of previous editors. However, a trend across the journal's 25 years concerns me: Articles are getting longer. Indeed, the average number of pages per article in *Memory & Cognition* has doubled (from 6.2 pages in 1973, to 7.8 in 1978, 8.3 in 1983, 9.1 in 1988, 9.6 in 1993, and 12 pages in 1996). *Memory & Cognition* is not alone in its middle-aged spread. During the two-decade-plus life of *JVLVB*, that journal's average article length also doubled (from 6.7 pages in 1962 to 14.3 pages in 1981). When the journal changed its name, it swelled even further, weighing in with a hefty average of 23 printed pages per article in 1995. Each decade of the *JEP:LMC* has also witnessed an increase in article girth, almost linearly (7.9 in 1975; 11.4 in 1985; 14.5 in 1995).

Why does this trend concern me? Don't we, as a field, have more to say? Aren't our theories more complex, and our laboratory phenomena in need of repeated demonstration? Perhaps so. But I fear that we are drifting more toward the humanities, where the standard publication currency is the book, and farther away from the biological and physical sciences, where a convincing unit of publication is a letter to the editor. I worry that we are not only failing to heed Strunk and White's mandate to *omit* needless words, we are grasping for them. In our quest to flesh out what we think is the "necessary" length of a manuscript for a journal, we construct introductions that resemble old-style dissertation literature reviews— extensive and boring menu listings of citations in which authors and dates are the topics of our sentences. We craft discussion sections that are public records of "what coulda been," or "what shoulda been," and we grasp for filler material, stealing thoughts (if not sentences) from our next grant proposal so that we have something to say in those last five requisite manuscript pages.

I believe that knowledge of the literature should be seen and not heard; it should be implicitly observed in the selection of the questions we ask, the methodologies we employ, the analyses we conduct, and the conclusions we draw. Alternative explanations should be ruled out by experiments, not by page after page of argumentative prose. Good data can speak for themselves.

To my knowledge, we have held constant the time limit given to members of our Psychonomic Society at our annual meeting for presenting their latest, greatest research. An average 15 minutes still suffices for (most of) us to tell a story, even a multiexperiment one. Why have we allowed our journal to swell? I believe that trimming the fat from our manuscripts will increase their probability of being read and their likelihood of affecting the field. Of course, ensuring the quality of these manuscripts, regardless of size, is the associate editors' and my highest priority.

—Morton Ann Gernsbacher, *Editor*