

# Editorial

## The Review Process

At the Meeting of the Editors of Learned Journals held in Ottawa on March 3rd and 4th this year, many concerns other than the sources for funding journals were addressed and examined in group discussions and by individual speakers. One of the prominent issues was that of peer review of manuscripts; another was the degree of responsibility to be taken by editors in editing papers – whether well written or of marginal quality.

In Canada, where the number of scholars in any particular narrow discipline may be few, it is often difficult to maintain a truly blind review because the reviewers may recognize a colleague's research or style of writing or a similarity to previous publications. One way to minimize this problem is to develop an editorial review board that is international in scope. This journal has taken steps in that direction.

Peer review is touchy – especially when contradictory evaluations of the same manuscript are made by different reviewers. An editor must be alert to whether the evaluation relates to the content or to style and appearance. Many a good article can be salvaged from poorly composed papers – although that should not be a necessary procedure for papers written by members of the academic community. It has become the policy of this journal to return papers to authors with suggestions for revision, unless there are gross errors of content, obvious defects in the research methodology, or distortions of research results.

All of this leads to a concern of many editors and persons who serve as reviewers. How extensive can the suggestions of editors and reviewers be without giving them second authorship, or at least a note of recognition for their contribution? Is it ethical to take full credit for an article that would never have been published without the scholarly interventions of another person?

It is unfortunate that the pressure to publish has developed into a climate that has created some "headaches" for editors of learned journals. It is clear that many papers written either in haste or desperation, or with superficial preparation, research, and editing are being submitted to many journals. Even so, the editor must give a certain amount of attention to every paper received.

There are no ready-made answers to these issues. Perhaps persons who submit papers to journals may become more sensitized to the need to give stricter attention to their writing after reading these statements.

The *MJE* is increasing the number of review board members to 40 in September, 1989, with the purpose in mind to give a wider range of opinions, evaluations, and suggestions to authors who submit their work to this journal. But, however qualified the editor may be, or how extensive the review board may be in terms of expertise and knowledge of good writing, authors must take the initiative to submit articles that are worthy of their academic and professional status.

**W.M.T.**