

EXCERPTS FROM A STATEMENT MADE BY ROBERT ORMES, MANAGING EDITOR OF SCIENCE MAGAZINE, PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

Purposes of Society Publications

The journals published by scientific and other professional societies differ from typical commercial and business or trade publications in a number of ways. The basic objective of the society publications is to provide readers with information relevant to their scholarly discipline, while that of commercial publications is to make a profit and that of business or trade publications is to help their readers make a profit. In view of these disparate objectives the contents of the three types of magazines usually are quite different both with respect to quality and quantity of editorial material and also with respect to advertisements.

In general, the editorial content of the society journals meets the very high intellectual standards of the scholars in the disciplines which they cover. Articles are donated by their authors. These articles are judged by outside reviewers of high professional reputation. Selection is made on the basis of the article's contribution to the discipline and is not affected by business considerations. Business considerations may force the society to delay publication of an article, but they do not affect the decision to publish. Publication delays of 1, 2, or more years are not at all uncommon among scholarly journals, particularly if the society is primarily dependent on dues for support or if the journal can attract only small amounts of advertising or other revenue. Other things being equal, the society spends incremental revenue from dues, advertising, or other sources to reduce the backlog of unpublished but accepted manuscripts.

In contrast, the editorial content of commercial and business or trade publications is determined by the editorial staff without recourse to outside experts. The editorial staff, however large, can never be large enough to bring uniformly excellent intellectual resources to bear on the choice of what to accept or reject. Furthermore, the staff must necessarily give thought to business considerations if profit is to be made -- payments to authors, effects on advertisers, effects on copy sales and subscriptions. Trivial, intellectually mediocre, and even bizarre stories often get into print. Other things being equal, incremental revenue is expected to flow through to profit. Some business and trade publications include considerable editorial content consisting of advertisers' new product releases, which may or may not be rewritten to conform to editorial style. A few publications have no editorial content except product releases.

In general, the advertising content of scholarly journals varies from zero up to about 30 percent and occasionally to 40 percent,