

# PERFORMANCE & INSTRUCTION JOURNAL

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Send editorial items to the editor, Richard A. Swanson, University of Minnesota, 1954 Buford Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108. Telephone 612-376-5065. A broad range of contributions are accepted for the *Journal*, brief news items, opinion articles, letters to the editor, data-based articles, papers of a theoretical nature, tips for technologists, poems, humor, and other original items. Manuscripts submitted for the Research and Theory Department will be refereed. The *Journal* generally cannot handle manuscripts over 2000 words (eight double-spaced, typewritten pages). The APA style of documentation is prescribed. Author guidelines are available from the editor.

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## Why Did You Do It?

My personal experiences have been that the coffee shop, lobby, and late night exchanges with respected colleagues are by far the most rewarding parts of any conference. In the middle of one of these summits at the 1983 NSPI Conference, a friend asked me earnestly why I had accepted the editorship of the *Journal*. His question stopped me dead in my tracks—I couldn't remember. I smiled, told him so, and then we both had a good laugh.

In observing the scores of people working for the conference (some smiling and most tired), I wondered how many of them had forgotten the real reason why they were doing what they were doing for NSPI. Is the root of so much of NSPI compulsive behavior a communal search for truth?

Sharing and critiquing ideas is fundamental to the search for truth and the growth of a profession. Our best ideas, carefully worded and disseminated through the literature, are important to this end. Equally important are personal exchanges that occur during a conference between professionals having alternative or opposing views. In this vein, a conference can serve as a crucible for new ideas or as a platform for propagating old ones. There is probably a fine line between the two, with a "heaven or hell" consequence to the profession that chooses one over the other. Propagating old ideas is like sitting in front of a large mirror. Anyone who can do it for very long and feel comfortable must surely have a limited perspective.

A professional conference can purposefully structure forums for new ideas. Old ideas, no matter how good, should not be ends unto themselves at a professional conference. Sessions that focus only on generally-known information should not be tolerated. Existing knowledges are the benchmarks against which the profession can compare and critique new theories, research, and practices. Old truths, if valid, will only be stronger for the challenge. If they cannot stand the test, they should be composted for future harvests.

Wouldn't several important new idea sessions in each conference track be exciting? Carefully prepared presentations based on solid thinking and/or research could be immediately followed by rigorous evaluation and debate. Important new idea sessions would be good for the profession and would help keep the conference lobby population to a P&I minimum.

Richard A. Swanson  
Editor