

RS Journal ?

In the last issue, within the licence afforded by the editorial role, I brought up the problems I had encountered when trying to decide which articles to include in the Newsletter. At the same time, after mailing, I noticed that there is a rapidly expanding list of people who are interested in what we have to say. This made me reflect on the origins and appropriateness of the present format in which the Newsletter is produced.

The Newsletter was originally conceived of as a means of trying out ideas among friends where the people involved did, more or less, constitute a friendship network. Now, with an apparent "membership" of nearly two hundred and fifty, this is no longer the case. There is a small but slowly increasing number of people who are interested in developing the ideas which are at the basis of our platform and who need to have an informal forum. There is a much larger group of people, drawn from many areas of statistical activity who are interested in, and might be persuaded by what we have to say if it is presented in a coherent fashion.

It seems to me, therefore, that the present format, which hovers uneasily between a chat forum and an alternative publishing outlet for often undiscussed and hurriedly written pieces, is likely to expand in size without being satisfactory to either group. I suggest that we should consider alternatives such as:

- a regular, short, newsletter with news, comments, short reviews and ideas (with no item being more than a page and most much shorter); and
- some more serious publishing outlet for collections of papers which had previously been discussed among "friends".

However attractive this may or may not be in principle, the main issue is one of financial ability. The Newsletter can obviously be produced cheaply and, so long as the mailing list is restricted to those who really are interested (a case for a sliding sub?) can be distributed cheaply say for less than £10 per issue. The main problem would be the collection of papers (or journals) which, I presume, we would want to produce and publish ourselves in order to retain complete control over its contents.

Let us assume that we would aim at producing a 128 side A5 (small format) roughly annually - which would include between six and ten original short papers. A journal of that size could sell for around 75p., and we could perhaps calculate on an eventual sale of say 1,600 (to make calculations easy) making a total retail revenue of £1,200. To break even we would therefore have to produce 2,000 copies of the journal (allowing for losses and wastage) for less than £800, since one third of the sales income would go either to the retailer or to the G.P.O. It would be possible to keep within these sorts of castings if we print with an "alternative" press and use the Publishers Distribution Cooperation for distribution as follows:

- printing of contents and cover of journal roughly £500; and
- collation, trimming, and binding roughly £200.

I think it is worth going into in more detail - does anyone else? In which case, it could be brought up at the next meeting.

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