

editor's page

Who Reads the Journal?

The typical reader of the *Journal*, according to our recent readership study, is a male county Extension staff member with a master's degree and has had 11 or more years of experience in the Extension Service. He usually reads the feature articles, the Idea Corner, Research in Brief reports, and the Forum. Occasionally, he reads the book reviews and abstracts. The typical reader sees a journal as being important to the profession and believes the *Journal of Extension* adequately serves Extension in that regard. Incidentally, he subscribes to 2.7 professional journals and 5 or more popular publications. How do you compare to this "average" reader?

Over the years, the editorial staff and the Board of Directors have been concerned with how they could more adequately provide a viable resource for professional improvement. With the diverse audience of Extension professionals, this isn't an easy task. To help them fulfill this responsibility, the Board of Directors contracted with the University of Georgia and James Bergeaux, Extension agronomist, to conduct a readership study. In addition to determining a profile of our readers, the study tried to determine if the *Journal* is contributing to the professional competency of Extension personnel and to find out if the content and format meet the expectations of Extension staff members.

We learned that our readers wanted us to print material dealing with program development, teaching-learning approaches, program evaluation, leadership, and administration. The editorial policy of providing ideas, concepts, and information related to these topics as well as meaningful success stories and basic research information was reaffirmed. Many of the changes in the *Journal* initiated last year are a direct result of this study. We're constantly working to incorporate other recommendations into the ongoing operation.

When we asked nonsubscribers why they didn't subscribe, we got some interesting answers. The primary reasons were: not enough practical information, content not relevant, don't have time to read it, and aimed at too general an audience.

It's my hope that we can continue to present more practical information in a more readable style. Each month we ask a selected group of Extension staff members to evaluate each issue. These evaluations tell us that we're improving . . . but that we have a long way to go. We'll continue to work with authors to help them improve their writing style.

The readership study has made a significant contribution to the *Journal*. We're committed to improving what we believe is a fine product. If you have ideas for improving the *Journal*, we'd like to hear from you.

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