

# forum

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*On Evaluating Journal Articles.* What evidence is there to show that, for its readers, the *Journal* is an important, readable, and useful addition to the growing field of Extension literature? The number of subscribers is one source of evidence; letters from readers is another; while informal comments the editor hears is still another.

There are, however, two *Journal*-related committees that provide such vital information in a more formal way—the Editorial Committee, which is selected on the recommendation of the Board of Directors, with approval of the respective Extension directors; and the Evaluation Committee, composed of interested *Journal* subscribers who are selected by the editor with help from state liaison chairpersons. Each group is representative of the total Extension profession, but each functions independently.

Editorial Committee members fulfill their responsibilities by identifying high quality manuscripts for *Journal* inclusion, assigning ones they feel worthy of publication with a rating of 8-10 on a 10-point scale. If Evaluation Committee members fulfill their duties, their collective scores ought to significantly agree with Editorial Committee scores, but at the same time, reflect their own feelings that the printed *Journal* articles are important enough to satisfy Extension-related needs.

How then do the highly rated manuscript mean scores recorded by *Journal* Editorial Committee members *prior* to publication compare with the mean scores given the same article by Evaluation Committee members *after* publication? Our investigative hypothesis states that there's no significant difference between articles scored by the two important *Journal* committee personnel.

Three basic assumptions are necessary to test the hypothesis. First, there exists a common Extension interest bond between manuscript reviewers and article evaluators. Second, the readability criterion appearing on both committee score sheets is interpreted in the same manner. Third, the "content" criterion on the Editorial Committee review form and the "usefulness" criterion on the evaluation form are comparable.

Article selection and statistical methodology were kept relatively simple. Reviewers' and evaluators' scores were obtained on all articles published in Volume XVI (1978) and in the January/February, 1979, issue of Volume XVII. The mean scores were then subjected to an analysis of variance for a two-group design. The arrived at F ratio of less than 1.0 revealed *no significant differences between reviewers and evaluators*. Failing to reject our hypothesis tells us that both reviewers and evaluators rated *Journal* articles about the same. Such sameness in rankings takes on added meaning since reviewers normally process only one article at a time, while evaluators simultaneously rate all articles appearing in a single *Journal* issue.

Four groups identified with the *Journal* should be pleased with this finding: the Editorial Committee for their recommendations to print useful articles; the editors and assistant editor for putting together a publication of meaningful articles; the Evaluation Committee, whose collective actions validate the opinions of the editor and Editorial Committee; and lastly, the majority of *Journal* readers, who can assuredly look to the *Journal* as a source of important and useful profession-related articles.