

EDITORIAL

This issue of the *JSE* helps mark a new era in the way the Society for Scientific Exploration does business. After a very fruitful and gratifying alliance between the *Journal* and Allen Press, the *JSE* has now moved to a new online publishing system that is both more contemporary in its outlook and also considerably more cost-effective. Although SSE members won't notice some of the differences immediately (except for the *Journal's* new look), there will be a gradual change to the *Journal's* delivery system. SSE members will receive the *JSE* in its downloadable online version (PDF of the whole issue, plus PDFs of each article) as part of the regular SSE membership, and eventually SSE members will have the option of paying an extra fee for receiving the hardcopy version as well. For now, however, all *JSE* subscribers will also continue to receive the hardcopy version of the *Journal*. Moreover, print-on-demand issues of the *JSE* are readily available from the online vendor Amazon.com—a development that the SSE hopes will significantly expand the *Journal's* reach worldwide.

This method of journal delivery has become increasingly common in the past few years, and understandably so. Many readers already feel overwhelmed by the number of journals and books in their collections, and they're accordingly concerned about finding the space for new acquisitions. And of course for many of them, the ease of storing and organizing documents electronically offers one viable solution to the problem—not to mention the further virtue of saving some trees. On the other hand, SSE recognizes that many readers still value the feel and convenience of flipping through a physical copy of the *Journal*, and that's why subscribers will continue to have the option of purchasing a regular hardcopy version of the *JSE* in addition to what will eventually be the default online subscription.

One additional benefit of the new arrangement—at least for SSE members—is that downloadable PDFs of *JSE* papers will be available right up to the current issue. In the past, both SSE members and non-members could freely download *JSE* issues starting from about two years before the current volume. Under the new arrangement, non-members will continue to have access through the SSE website to old issues of the *JSE*, but SSE members will have online access, on the new *JSE* website, to the current and all past issues. Eventually, non-members might have online access to the most recent issues for a modest fee.

Another benefit of our new publishing system is that the SSE can afford to expand the size of individual *JSE* issues. Previously, we had to limit the number of pages per issue, due to the expense of printing and shipping nothing but hardcopy versions of the *Journal*. The difference won't be enormous (at least about

100 extra pages per year—hopefully more, assuming of course that a sufficient number of submissions survive our editorial scrutiny). In any case, I'm gratified that we'll be able to offer subscribers more of the intriguing *JSE* content than we could afford to provide in recent years.

Now, on to matters of greater drollery. I was recently contacted by a French author who was considering submitting a paper to *JSE*. He emailed me asking what the *Journal's* "impact factor" was. Initially, I wondered whether French social scientists had concocted yet another implausible way of reducing inherently imprecise real-world interactions to a procrustean and unilluminating quantitative measure. But as I discovered after further communication, the author simply wanted to know whether published papers in the *JSE* stood a good chance of making a difference in the scientific or scholarly community (e.g., by having its articles cited both frequently and sympathetically).

Too bad; I was ready with some smart-aleck responses. For example, I considered telling this gentleman that the American Medical Association assigned the *JSE* a risk-factor of 0.975, indicating a high probability of causing coronary distress among mainstream scientists. At any rate, the author was wondering about a set of issues we at the *Journal* and in the *SSE* wonder ourselves. To what extent does the *JSE* influence scientific and scholarly opinion, and is that influence constructive? Is the *Journal* read and respected by anyone not already persuaded about the importance and legitimacy of at least one of the topics covered in the *JSE's* pages?

We know, of course, that *JSE* subscribers hold diverse opinions, and often opposing positions on some of the topics covered in the *Journal*. Indeed, they don't all agree as to which topics deserve to be covered in the pages of the *Journal*, much less which theoretical stance is appropriate for the topics that do merit consideration. But I believe they're all committed to the idea that mainstream science represents, at best, our scientific understanding du jour. I believe they agree that currently received scientific opinion might later go the way of phlogiston, and that serious and honest empirical inquiry demands that one attend carefully to phenomena that are poorly understood—perhaps especially those that seem on their face to challenge our current understanding of nature. Now, I realize also that most scientists will at least pay lip service to this pragmatic or flexibly empiricist point of view. Perhaps what distinguishes them from *JSE* readers is their readiness, nevertheless, to denounce or peremptorily reject certain—perhaps many—areas of anomalistic inquiry without having seriously examined the relevant data or issues for themselves. That is, they declare one set of beliefs but betray another, whereas *JSE* readers seem actually to put their money where their mouths are.

But does that mean that the *JSE* will have only a negligible “impact factor” outside the community of anomalists? I’d say that’s an open question. To some extent it’s the job of the SSE to promote its goals and achievements to the world at large, and I see the *JSE* as the Society’s standard bearer. What we at the *JSE* can do is to monitor carefully the quality of work we present in the *Journal’s* pages and maintain the high standards the *JSE* has displayed all along. I believe that work speaks for itself and will undoubtedly impress open-minded newcomers if only they can be exposed to the *Journal*.

I saw some examples of this in connection with our previous issue, devoted to so-called cold fusion research. In vetting some of the submissions to the *Journal*, I enlisted the help of several chemists who knew nothing about the SSE and *JSE*. They were understandably curious, and I was able to show them sample issues of the *Journal* and direct them to the many past volumes available online. I know they were favorably impressed and intrigued, and, even if they don’t immediately join the SSE, I know that my efforts made a difference and that positive buzz about the SSE and *JSE* has spread at least a bit further within the academic community.

I also give frequent public lectures, and I look for appropriate opportunities to mention the SSE and *JSE*. These occasions also demonstrate how educated audience members are often curious to know more about the Society and its *Journal*. I’m convinced these seed-planting efforts have already paid off and will continue to do so. They probably won’t lead to a seismic change in scientific or public opinion (or a major increase in new Society memberships or *JSE* subscriptions), but presumably that’s to be expected of a publication devoted to topics outside the mainstream. What we can hope for is an increasing recognition that the *JSE* is a reliable guide to the limits of scientific orthodoxy and to the best work on the scientific frontier. And (to return to the topic with which I began this Editorial) I’m optimistic that the SSE’s and *JSE*’s new and enhanced online presence will be an important force in making that happen.

STEPHEN E. BRAUDE