

EDITORIAL

QUALITY, BREVITY, ECONOMY

As a graduate student of William Morton Wheeler and George Howard Parker, I once submitted a manuscript of some 150 pages to Professor Parker. It was promptly returned with the remark that any good thoughts would almost certainly be buried in all those words, and that it might just as well be cut in half before going any further. The manuscript was cut down by about 50 pages and resubmitted. This time it came back with the written comment, "Evidently you do not understand what a sound condensation means." The third time, after another shaking-down in which most of the words of more than three syllables and most of the tables were tossed out bodily, it began to win at least a small amount of approval, and the comment came back: "Good! Now it looks as if you are almost ready to begin to write it."

I have such a high respect for the talent and learning represented among the contributors to *Mosquito News* that it is only with the greatest reluctance that I ask for revisions of their manuscripts, or for the condensations which can so often be made by the elimination of tables and superfluous illustrations. But the plain fact is that tables and illustrations cost money. Some are essential, others, if not essential, add greatly to the value of a paper. But many illustrations seem to be included just because the author made them and could not bring himself to omit them. A few papers leave the inescapable impression that they represent an unedited portion of an annual report or a thesis, or a transcript of field notes. The Editor feels that truly significant points are often masked, and potentially good papers often spoiled by authors who are in such a hurry to get on to the next piece of work that they rush the deadline with papers which on

more leisurely consideration they would have withheld or shortened by many words. Graduate student theses are often padded with complimentary references to members of the graduate committee, with acknowledgments of all kinds of help, from the janitor to wives and children, and with long historical introductions accompanied by interminable references, to show how well the student knows his subject. Most of this material can and should be omitted, when the manuscript is prepared for publication.

If there are several illustrations, much time and expense can often be saved if they are so chosen that they will all take the same amount of reduction and can be trimmed and fitted to make a full page or half page plate, or a vertical cut of column width. *Labels and key numbers and letters should be so placed that they do not extend so far into the margins that they prevent an otherwise acceptable reduction to column or page width.*

All authors should read and follow the manuscript rules and regulations printed on the inside back cover of *Mosquito News*. Both the Editor and the printer have been extremely lenient in the interpretation and enforcement of these rules, but this is a good opportunity to mention that every violation is expensive to the Association. For example, although the printer might accept and work from a copy on thin or off-size paper, such copy is more difficult to handle, takes more time to read, and will result in more errors for the proofreaders to correct; **THE ASSOCIATION PAYS FOR ALL OF THIS EXTRA TIME AND LABOR.**

The author can estimate very easily how many pages his paper will require. A statement should accompany the man-

uscript authorizing charges for extra pages and giving the name of the person or agency to whom the bill should be sent. Most authors and organizations now provide for and pay these charges.

Returning to the subject of brevity when it can be accomplished without sacrifice of quality, I am reminded of

an old rule for pruning a certain type of tree: cut out everything you think the tree can stand, then back away, look it over, and go back and take out half as much again. This rule applies to nearly all writing and to nearly all writers, so "think not to send to ask for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." D. L. C.

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