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# Teachers' Journals

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## Teachers' Journals

One of the first of the many magazines published for Iowa teachers was R. R. Gilbert's *District School Journal of Education of the State of Iowa*, issued monthly in Dubuque 1853-1854. Its unwieldy title was soon reduced by deleting the first two words, and in its latter year it was called simply *Iowa Journal of Education*. It was a monthly of 25 pages sold for a dollar a year. Though a useful little magazine, it apparently never succeeded in reaching a statewide audience.

A little later came the ambitious *Voice of Iowa*, a 32-page monthly edited and published by James L. Enos in Cedar Rapids 1857-1858. It claimed to be the first "magazine" in Iowa, but it never had much in its pages that could be called belles-lettres. Enos himself wrote "Historical Sketches of Iowa" for several of its numbers. It was really a teachers' journal, however, and claimed to be the organ of the Iowa State Teachers' Association and the Iowa Phonetic Association. A department was set in "phonetic type." It tried and failed to get a bill through the legislature authorizing each school district in the state to subscribe for one copy. The *Voice*, though it fell silent so soon, was an interesting effort in educational journalism.

The *Iowa Instructor* took up where the *Voice* left off — beginning in 1859. It was issued in Des Moines by Mills and Company, headed by Frank M. Mills. This was one of the leading publishing firms of the state. It was soon to acquire the *Iowa State Register*, and it would eventually publish a variety of periodicals. In 1862 it took over the *Iowa School Journal*, founded by Andrew J. Stevens in the same year as the *Instructor*, and combined the two. A combination title was used for a few years, but finally the merger became *Iowa School Journal*. During most of its life this periodical had some official character. Even before the merger with the *Instructor*, the *Journal* was edited for a year or two by Thomas H. Benton, Secretary of the State Board of Education, and in 1870-1871 the editorial chair was occupied by Abraham S. Kissell, State Superintendent of Public Instruction. In 1872-1873 the *Journal* was furnished, by act of the Legislature, to all County Superintendents and school officers in the state.

But in 1875 the *Journal* was absorbed into W. E. Crosby's *Common School*, an excellent 24-page quarto filled with news notes and good original and selected articles published in Davenport. It had been founded only the year before; now it was able to announce itself as "the official paper of the State Superintendent." That position was now filled by Alonzo Abernethy, the educator who persuaded the Legislature to establish the

county Normal Institutes that were to play a part later (as we shall see) in the development of teachers' papers on a local level. The *Common School and Iowa Journal of Education*, as it was now called, did not last long, however. The middle 1870's were hard times everywhere; the journal never reached more than 1,800 circulation, and it perished in 1877.

The name *Iowa School Journal* was revived for a Des Moines magazine founded in 1885 under the sponsorship of the State School Association, later called the State Education Association. The name was changed in 1893 to *Iowa Schools* and three years later to *Midland Schools*. Under this name it became the best edited and most successful of the state's teachers' journals, and it is today the sole magazine in this field, with a circulation approaching 30,000. Among the men most notable as its editors in earlier years were Charles F. Pye and Z. C. Thornburg.

Returning to the 1870's, we must note the *Iowa Normal Monthly* (1877-1914), founded by W. J. Shoup and edited in its latter years by James A. Edwards. It was a Dubuque journal of 44 pages octavo; for many years it circulated more than 4,000 copies at \$1.50 a year. In Keokuk the *Central School Journal* (1877-1895) was founded by W. J. Nedes and others as a monthly of 12 quarto pages at only 50 cents a year. In 1880 it changed format to 16 pages of full newspaper size. By

1886, under the editorship of J. C. Paradice, it claimed 8,600 circulation, and called itself "the leading educational paper of the Northwest."

Obviously, we cannot even list here the many other magazines for teachers that have been published in Iowa in the past 110 years, but half a dozen of the more interesting short-lived ventures deserve mention: *Literary Advertiser and Public School Advocate* (1859-1860), a little monthly issued from Iowa City by S. S. Howe (already noted as editor of the Second Series of the *Annals of Iowa*), priced at 25 cents a year; *Inter-State Normal Monthly* (1877-1880), of Moulton; *Iowa Teacher* (1882-1886), an ambitious and well edited monthly at Marshalltown; *Northwestern Journal of Education* (1885-1886), a weekly of 16 quarto pages devoted mainly to news of teachers and their organizations, Des Moines; *Southern Iowa Educator* (1895-1900), Albia, another weekly; *Iowa Science Teacher* (1935-1939), issued by the Iowa Association of Science Teachers at Cedar Rapids.

Finally, we must note one of the most extraordinary developments in the entire history of educational journalism in the state. This was the proliferation of county teachers' papers. It was not peculiar to Iowa, but was most prominent in the Midwest, Pennsylvania, and New York. It was encouraged by the county Superintendents of Schools, who felt that the greater educational

journals were not well suited to country school teachers without college backgrounds. It was also encouraged by the state supported county Normal Institutes, held annually at county-seat towns. These were great social and educational events, which teachers were required to attend. They incidentally afforded the conductors of the county teachers' papers (usually local publishers associated with persons connected with the schools) an opportunity to build up subscription lists. The *Wright County Teacher* (1887-1890), of Clarion, was a good example of such a paper; it was later revived as *Wright County Education* (1908-1912).

But a simplification of the system was soon provided by the use of "ready-print" teachers' supplements included with an issue of a county-seat weekly once a month. Such supplements included advertising inserted by the supplier, greatly reducing the cost to the newspaper. The *Iowa Teacher* (1885-1910), a Charles City monthly, built up a business in supplying these supplements to a point at which it was serving a third of Iowa's counties and 35 in neighboring states. The Educational Newspaper Union, of Chicago, did a similar business. These supplements, as well as the independent teachers' papers, had pages of full newspaper size to suit the convenience and equipment of the newspaper offices that handled them. Their content was directed mainly to the problems

of the country school teacher, with definite suggestions and "guides"; but quotations from educational classics were often included. The independent county teachers' papers sought circulation not only from teachers but also from boards of education and parents; they usually sold for 50 cents a year and furnished eight pages monthly.

It was the consolidated school movement that eventually put an end to this system. Likewise, it was consolidation in journalism, with multiple mergers, together with the centralization of teachers' organizations into one strong state association, that made *Midland Schools* the only general educational journal in the state as much as 40 years ago.