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Editorial

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Editorial

THE TESTING OF HYPOTHESES, the synthesis of observations, the analysis of data, the scholarly review and critiquing of earlier works, the act of artistic creation are all ways in which new knowledge is generated and new insights and interpretations are achieved. But these activities depend crucially on communication without which there can be no evaluation of ideas leading to their refinement, acceptance, or refutation.

As our knowledge base has expanded so have we seen an exponential growth in the number of fields and subfields recognized as areas of scholarly endeavor. In parallel we have seen a compartmentalization not only of the language of scholarship but also of the fora for its transmission. Discussion and disputation on specific issues more often than not take place only in the meetings of learned societies or through the private or semiprivate communications of experts. Evidently there is nothing wrong with such dialogues. We must accept that there are and, perhaps increasingly will be, areas of study where the focus is so narrow or the vocabulary and syntax so specific that only insiders can hope to trade.

That said there remains for many a very real sense that the effort should be made wherever and whenever possible to achieve understanding across disciplinary boundaries; to build bridges not only between "the expert in the field" and "the layperson" but, perhaps even more importantly, between the members of the scholarly community itself.

This is to some extent achieved when readers of journals such as *Science* or *Scientific American* chance upon and read material outside their own particular areas of professional interest. But even then the interaction is, more often than not, between people engaged in fields of activity which are actually or historically perceived as being more or less closely related. How many historians read *Science*? The mass media can also play a role in introducing us to new discoveries and to new ideas. However, the range and depth of journalists' presentations are likely to be constrained by the needs of their medium.

The *Syracuse Scholar* was created to serve such a role; to provide members of this community with the means to present to their colleagues ideas thought appropriate for the attention of those outside their fields as well as those working within them.

Most usually such pieces will stand alone. But the founders of the *Scholar* were well aware that there could be occasions when the publication of a single article would not properly reflect the intellectual ferment and controversy associated with the evolution of a particular set of ideas and the creation (or rejection) of new paradigms. They envisaged times when it would be more appropriate to publish a cluster of two or more articles dealing with the same issue, albeit from differing standpoints, so that writers en-

gaged on opposing sides of a scholarly dispute could be given the opportunity to expose their preoccupations for consideration and evaluation by colleagues in other fields. To this end the founders of the *Scholar* provided for the publication of supplementary issues as the occasion arose.

This is such an issue. It contains two articles setting out opposite views of “deconstruction” which the authors hope will contribute to a wider discussion and evaluation of the concept and its implications for scholarship in fields beyond that of their own discipline.

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