Editorial

Slightly more than a decade has passed since the term microcomputer was introduced to the American public. During the early stages of microcomputer development there was a mystique which surrounded the use of this new and emerging technology. While advocates anticipated the limitless uses to which this new variation of existing technology could be applied, antagonists predicted its eventual demise. Yet the vast majority of the American public, whether intimidated or awed, waited to see what would evolve. It was not until the IBM Corporation introducted its "personal computer" in August of 1981 that the microcomputer was legitimized in the world of business and industry. In the five years since then, its rate of growth and development has accelerated at a staggering pace.

The rapid intrusion of computer technology upon American society has forced educators throughout this nation to assess the need to develop comprehensive, computer-based programs for students and teachers. Often there is little guidance available from state departments of education and institutions of higher education who are struggling with these issues themselves.

In the fall of 1984 a special task force was empowered by the United States Department of Education to investigate the use of technology " . . . to improve learning in our Nation's schools." Their report entitled "Transforming American Education: Reducing the Risk to the Nation," was delivered to the Secretary of Education in the spring of 1986. In Section 1 of this report the members of the task force ask five important questions:

1. Is the expenditure (on computer technology) justified;
2. Is the movement supported by careful planning;
3. Is the technology being applied appropriately;
4. Will it prove effective in the long term or is it merely a fad; and,
5. Where is all this activity leading education?

Following careful consideration of the issues and concerns surrounding the use of computer technology in schools, the task force detailed six areas considered important to the long-term successful integration of computer technology within education. The six areas of concern which were discussed include:

1. Planning;
2. Financing;
3. Teacher Education;
4. Curriculum and Instructional Practice;
5. Research, Development, Evaluation, and Dissemination; and,
6. Demonstration schools.

This special issue of **Educational Considerations** addresses many of the problems mentioned in the task force report. While there remains an overwhelming amount of work to be done, this is a start.

The theme of this edition focuses on the needs of school administrators and other educational policy makers for adequate information on the current issues on the uses of computers in our nation's schools. School administrators are charged with responsibility for making decisions. Usually, decisions are made based on a firm comprehension of a given situation which results from a thorough analysis of those conditions which may or may not influence anticipated outcomes. However, the base of information relevant to the issues concerning the implementation of computer-based programs at all levels of the educational spectrum changes almost daily, and most school administrators cannot stay current. In addition, it is only recently that a body of knowledge, pertinent to the implementation of computer technology in the education setting, is beginning to emerge.

This special issue of **Educational Considerations** brings together a variety of papers which are the results of recent research and writing in the area of computer technology in schools and the implications for administrative decision making—issues addressed by the task force report. The items contained in this issue have been divided into two sections: Section 1 contains articles which discuss the results of research analyses on the process of implementing computer based educational programs in various states; Section 2 includes a collection of articles in which the authors cover a range of current issues and concerns which should be considered by educators involved in the process of utilizing computer technology in their schools.

The authors who have contributed to this issue are educators from throughout the United States. All have worked with school districts in an attempt to evaluate computer-based programs for administrators, teachers, and students. While opinions may vary and personal preferences stated, it must be noted that each of these authors is committed to the study and reporting of educational practice, and I thank each of them for their contribution.

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