Beginning soon, The American Biology Teacher will feature Classroom Materials Reviews, and we need an editor for this new department. Classroom Materials Reviews will be comparable to two existing ABT departments: Book Reviews (edited by Elizabeth Cowles), and Classroom Media Reviews (edited by Jeffrey Sack).

The new department will publish reviews of new and innovative materials that will include, but not be limited to, biology curricula, modules, kits, and technology for collecting data in the lab and field that are available from commercial vendors. This new department will not review visual media or books, because that is the function of other departments. There will be a distinct emphasis on materials that are cutting-edge and that utilize learning through inquiry, as they will be expected to meet the spirit of the recommendations of the National Research Council’s National Science Education Standards and the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s Benchmarks for Science Literacy. The editor of Classroom Materials Reviews will solicit and receive requests from companies to have their materials classroom-tested and evaluated by biology teachers, recruit a set of teachers interested in doing the reviews, assign the reviews to appropriate teachers, ask the teachers to craft a one-page review that will be published in the ABT, and edit (if necessary) the final review. In return for taking the time to test and review materials, it is hoped that the corresponding materials will remain for use in the test classrooms, but this will be at the option of the vendors.

You may want to argue that there is a commercial aspect to this new department — and that is partially true. But its real purpose will be to make biology teachers aware and knowledgeable of new and useful materials that can potentially be used in their classrooms. Furthermore, these reviews can be archived in the ABT for ongoing inspection and research by educators.

The NABT is now requesting applications for editor of this new department. The editor should be a highly experienced biology teacher, probably at the high school or college level, have well developed interpersonal and organizational skills, and be willing to spend the time it will take to carry out the duties described.

This will be a volunteer position, as are those of the other ABT department editors. Interested biology educators should send a letter containing relevant experience and a short curriculum vitae to ABT Editor Bill Leonard (leonard@clemson.edu) by 15 April 2010. I will select the new editor in concert with the ABT Journal Advisory Committee in May and announce the selection in the August issue, along with a more detailed description of the new department. Materials for review can then be requested and reviews can commence in the fall of 2010.

This new department will be something of an experiment, in that this endeavor appears to be unprecedented for a professional education journal. If sufficient materials are not submitted for review or if there is difficulty securing reviews or an editor, the effort may be suspended. But I am optimistic about the valuable service this could provide to biology teachers.

Bill Leonard
Editor