

# WATER QUALITY RESEARCH JOURNAL OF CANADA

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## EDITORIAL

### The Reviewer and the Editorial Board: Not What They Seem

We Canadians are used to living in a world which is not quite what it seems. For example, the temperature on a typical winter's day may be quoted as a balmy  $-15^{\circ}\text{C}$ , yet we know that the real temperature with the wind-chill factor is closer to  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Similarly in summer, the thermometer registers a temperate  $+22^{\circ}\text{C}$ , yet with 95% humidity and the UV index at 9, not to mention a smog warning, we behave as any normal person would at  $+35^{\circ}\text{C}$ . This reality disconnect even extends to my own profession. I graduated as an engineer. So people would call me a train driver. Then, with a Masters and Ph.D. in Sanitary Engineering, I'm expected to be a plumber. [I'm reminded of that cute little book, *The Specialist*, (Sale, C. 1956. Specialist Pub. Co.) which seriously and graphically describes the intricacies of the work of a professional plumber and outhouse designer.] Now, with the euphemistic title of Environmental Engineer, my friends and acquaintances have visions of beaches and landscapes, tree-hugging sessions, and noise cancellation in the workplace. I am forced to retort, especially at cocktail parties while the canapés are being served, that sewage is my bread and butter.

Which brings up the obvious question: what has this to do with the Editorial Board? Well, let me take one step back, and remind readers about the scope of our journal. It covers the broad areas of water and wastewater treatment technology, the impact of pollutants on aquatic ecosystems, and everything which supports these categories, such as social, policy and regulatory issues, methods for assessing water quality, conservation and protection, etc. It should be clear that a simple environmental engineer will find himself out of his depth in most of these areas.

Now let us look at the reviewer, that unsung hero who is an expert in the subject area of the paper, who prepares a constructive, point-by-point three-page critique, and submits her review within 48 hours of receiving the paper. But unfortunately we hit that "not what

they seem" phenomenon which I mentioned earlier; in reality, many reviewers turn down the request to review, due to time constraints, lack of expertise, or other more creative excuses. Of those who do accept, many have to be cajoled to return their reviews in a timely fashion. Meanwhile the author is awaiting word regarding the future of his magnum opus, a publication which may just be necessary to clinch a promotion. On the other hand, I have found reviewers who more than fit the mold of unsung hero, in fact one even took it upon himself to help the author rewrite the paper! It is reviewers such as these upon whom the journal depends to maintain its high standard, whether it means rejecting an unsuitable paper, or pointing out deficiencies which can be corrected.

And so to the Editorial Board. After 9 months and 3 issues into my job as Editor, I believe that the Journal would be best served by having as its Editorial Board a group of subject editors, each chosen for their expertise in an area covered by the Journal. We should also have Francophone members to better expedite the review of papers written in French. In this way the subject editors will choose reviewers who in turn will most likely be experts in the narrow area of the particular paper under consideration. Thus the reviews will be of consistently high rigour, and the turn-around time between receipt of the paper and acceptance for publication will be reduced. I would also hope that by involving more people in the running and production of the journal, we will encourage the submission of even more high-quality papers, thus further increasing the prestige of the *Water Quality Research Journal of Canada*.

The continuing evolution of our Editorial Board will be reflected on Page ii of our Journal each month; perhaps you would consider volunteering as a member??

Ronald Gehr  
Editor