

Educational Technology in the Twilight Zone

by Denis Hlynka, Editor

With this issue of CJEC, I conclude three years as editor, and relinquish the task to Dr. Robert Bernard. It is perhaps appropriate, then, for a final editorial to present a personal view of the future of our field.

The fall 1985 television season introduced to the North American television audience a remarkable television clone. THE TWILIGHT ZONE is a new anthology series of science fiction television, directly based on the extremely popular series of the same name which first was seen in 1959. On the first new show, a story was told of a man who accidentally phones home (shades of ET?) only to be confronted by his own voice. But two souls cannot occupy the same body, so the story becomes a struggle for the dual personality in all of us . . . the struggle between good and evil . . . the hidden alter ego which we all conceal.

Psychology documents this characteristic and even gives the concept a name . . . schizophrenic. Psychology also tells us that the schizophrenic characteristic is not necessarily limited to two characters existing in one body, but even three or more.

What might be the fate of the educational technologist in the twilight zone . . . that vague, ambiguous dimension located somewhere between light and darkness, between reality and fantasy?

I perceive us as exhibiting just such a split personality. I perceive that same struggle taking place within the field of educational technology for the rest of the century. But our condition is even more serious, because we exhibit not merely a split personality, but a multiple personality.

It was in 1922 that the Italian dramatist Luigi Pirandello published his remarkable intellectual comedy with the curious title of SIX CHARACTERS IN SEARCH OF AN AUTHOR. The title should be especially thought provoking for educational technologists, since we are six professions in search of one unified field.

Our first profession is that of the audiovisual teacher, an individual who seeks to improve teaching through the theoretic justification of a concrete-abstract model.

Our second profession is that of the technologist, an individual who encourages adoption of the current new technology. Today it is the computer; yesterday it was the television and the day before yesterday, the radio. But the character is the same.

Our third profession is that of the instructional designer. He is grounded in psychology, and stresses the importance of a systematic design-develop-evaluate paradigm for developing effective and efficient teaching programs, systems, products, and packages.

Our fourth profession is that of the distance educator. He combines a specific technology with a systems approach to provide long distance correspondence communication.

Our fifth profession is that of the resource specialist, the librarian, the media consultant. This individual is our liaison between theory and practice, between the professor and the teacher. With only a slight variation, he is the salesman, the one who "sells" the hardware and the software which the other "characters" need to survive.

Our sixth profession is that of the researcher. This individual may be in mass media, in sociology, in education, in psychology . . . it doesn't really matter which. What does matter is the focus on whether research can inform practice. We know the answer, but again it doesn't matter. We ask the question anyway.

And so we have six "characters." In the "twilight zone," they seldom talk to each other. Often they don't even know that they exist within the same body. They each have their own organizations. In Canada, the first belongs to the American based AECT (Association for Educational Communications and Technology), the second belongs to ACIT (Associate Committee on Instructional Technology), formerly to ETRAC (Educational Television and Radio Association of Canada), the third belongs to DID (Division of Instructional Development), the fourth belongs to CADE (Canadian Association of Distance Education), the fifth belongs to CSLA (Canadian School Library Association), and the sixth belongs to CSSE (Canadian Society for Studies in Education).

And any leftovers belong to an organization called AMTEC.

In the "twilight zone," some of the characters usually know about the others, but sometimes they don't. Each group holds a regular conference. Several of them have their own journals or newsletters. Yet, at bottom, they all talk about the same things.

In the meantime, the rest of the educational world ignores them, or tolerates them.

But lest anyone accuse me of painting a negative picture of the field of educational technology, let me quickly point out that in the "twilight zone" nightmares have a habit of taking control. Only in the "twilight zone" is such a degree of ambiguity tolerable and possible. We in educational technology have no need for concern, because we live in the REAL world.

was involved; believe me, the entire team deserves our thanks and admiration.

One thing that struck me about the '85 conference planning team was their diversity of background. I know it was no accident that the team included people from all levels of public education and training, government agencies and private industry. Indeed, this mix is con-

sistent with the diversity of membership in our organization, and this diversity is perhaps worth some brief comment.

Any attempt to categorize the occupation of our constituent members by type of work, type of enterprise, level of enterprise, etc. runs the double risk of occupying too much space on paper and alienating those whose occupation will have been omitted. In short, the work would be exhausting but not necessarily exhaustive. Given the fact that we have a diversity of membership, the question is: does this diversity represent a strength or a weakness? Most national organizations stand for a cause for which they will lobby shamelessly. For example, the National Rifle Association (NRA) uses a clip of President Reagan in its television advertising: its cause? — fighting gun control. Because the NRA has this clearly focussed objective it is seen as a strong organization. As a comparison, consider AMTEC's position with respect to copyright. Since our membership includes both producers and consumers of curriculum materials, it is unlikely that AMTEC would ever be as vociferous about copy-

right as NRA is about gun control. Does that make AMTEC weak? Not necessarily. Public standards on issues will always be perceived in context, and if AMTEC is known as a national organization with a diverse constituency, its statements will be accepted as a reasoned view. Can AMTEC, therefore, have a cause? We share a fundamental goal, namely to improve the quality of instruction. This may manifest itself in curriculum design, delivery systems and a host of other activities. Yet the fundamental goal of our enterprise remains the same. This enterprise is under attack and has been for a decade, especially in the public education sector. On a scale of Expansion-Maintenance-Survival-Extinction, I suspect we are hovering somewhere between Maintenance and Survival. So we have a cause? Yes. First, to confirm AMTEC as the national body that speaks for the advancement of instructional quality through media and technology, without representing vested interests. Second, to use our combined voice to nudge us back at least comfortably onto the Maintenance range of the scale. Our

ongoing efforts in publicity and membership can help us in the first area, and communication (CJEC; Standards) can help in the second. Can our diversity be considered a strength? On balance, I think so.

Speaking of strengths, we are all looking forward with great anticipation to our 1986 annual conference. The Toronto site will prove attractive to members from all over Canada, and the heavy concentration of local media people should make it the best-attended conference in many years. The planning committee under Nels Auger is working very hard to make June 14-18, 1986 a memorable event for us all. Plan to be there.

Finally, we would be remiss not to take this occasion to thank Denis Hlynka for his work as editor of CJEC over the past three years. Under his careful husbandry the journal has continued to grow in stature. The editorial task is being taken on by Bob Bernard of Concordia University in Montreal, and we wish him well.

Ed Crisp
President, AMTEC

MEDIA NEWS

New CJEC Editor

This is the last issue of CJEC under the editorship of Denis Hlynka. With the next issue, Vol 15, #1, Dr. Robert Bernard of Concordia University will take the post of editor.

EIC (Employment and Immigration) Program

Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) is continuing to support the growth of cooperative education in Canada.

Cooperative Education 1985/86, an option of EIC's new Job Entry Program, is aimed at helping school boards, colleges and universities cover the additional administrative costs of creating new cooperative education projects or expansion of existing work/study projects. Employment and Immigration Canada will contribute up to 85% of such costs in the first year and 75%, 55% and 35% over the subsequent three years for approved projects.

How successfully young people make the transition from school to work depends on their cognitive skills, knowledge, abilities to seek out and pursue job opportunities, and on the demand for such competencies in the labour market.

Employment experience, it is reasoned, may lead to a practical understanding of principles learned in the classroom. This experience may provide a wider knowledge of career alternatives, an opportunity to test occupational inclinations, personal maturation and perhaps an income which many young people need in order to remain in school.

Cooperative Education has proven to be an effective process in preparing secondary and post-secondary students for the eventual entry into the labour force. It formally integrates academic learning and on-the-job related work experience, thereby increasing the graduate's chance of obtaining satisfying employment. Employers are strong supporters of work/study programs. Canada needs to increase the number of these programs so that more students may participate.

Interested school boards, colleges and universities may obtain additional infor-

mation by contacting their local Canada Employment Centre. Applications will be available by late August, 1985. The closing date for submissions is November 30, 1985.

W.J.H. Poole
Director
Youth Employment Directorate

An Ethnic Broadcasting Policy

OTTAWA/HULL — The CRTC published broadcasting policy guidelines that reflect Canada's linguistic and cultural diversity (Public Notice CRTC 1985-139).

This follows an extensive consultative process that included a series of public hearings throughout Canada in March 1985. Approximately 3.2 million Canadians of various ethnic origins were represented by a broad spectrum of national and provincial organizations and individuals as well as numerous representatives from the broadcasting industry.

"Ethnic programming services are an integral part of broadcasting today and

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President's Message

Benjamin Franklin once wrote to a friend: "I am writing you a long letter because I do not have the time to write you a short one." What I am writing now is of medium length. . . .

First, let me say that anyone who miss-

ed our annual conference in Calgary in June missed a great one! Bob Sivertsen and his magnificent crew arranged everything perfectly, even the weather. Having experienced Bob's role the previous year, I had some inkling of what