With the reorganization of the ASME firmly in place following the 1981 Summer Annual Meeting in Reno in June, the leadership of the many segments of the Society can turn their attention to the reaffirmation of the Society's goals. In particular, the technical divisions are charged with the responsibility of disseminating the information that is collectively deemed to be useful to the members of the mechanical engineering profession. Few readers of this journal, or of any of the other ASME Transactions, are unaware of the increased scrutiny that the information dissemination sector of the Society has been receiving. Without attempting to minimize the complexities of the issue, one might characterize the current state as a dilemma between serving the needs of a sophisticated research establishment, composed of a relatively small fraction of the ASME membership, and the increasingly vocal requirements of the practicing mechanical engineers.

The new Council on Engineering (COE), which comprises the technical divisions and the communications and research functions, is the body that ultimately must grapple with this dilemma. In doing so, the COE must compete for resources with other Society segments, some of which are psychologically more attuned to the bulk of the membership than is technical information dissemination. The Pressure Vessels and Piping (PV&P) Division, as but one of the units of the COE, can be considered as an extremely sensitive barometer in this area, because the individuals who profess an interest in pressure vessels and piping span the spectrum between theory and practice more uniformly than do those interested in other technical divisions.

The PV&P Division attempts to accommodate the technical information needs of its constituency through conference, publications, and professional development activities. The conference component reaches one part of the spectrum—namely, those who are willing to make the investment in time, energy, and money to prepare, present, discuss, or just observe the most recent information in the field of pressure vessels and piping. Professional development mechanisms tend to reach another portion of the spectrum—generally speaking, those who wish the technical information to be reduced to standard practice. In the area of technical publication, however, the PV&P Division tries to match its activities to its audience. This is the reason for the multiple modalities of publication, ranging from this journal to special publications to pamphlet papers presented at conferences.

A forthcoming contribution is the special volume Pressure Vessel and Piping—Design Technology: A Decade of Progress. This book represents the joint efforts of the Design and Analysis Committee and the Computer Technology Committee of the PV&P Division to synthesize the developments in the field which were developed and first applied during the decade of the 1970's. A second volume is to be produced jointly by the Operations, Applications and Components Committee and the Materials and Fabrication Committee of the PV&P Division, is in the planning stages. Unlike previous volumes in the Decade of Progress series, these books are not bound collections of enduring contributions to the field. Rather, the intent was, and is, to solicit comprehensive reviews of the relevant subject matter in a more formal textbook style. The editors of each chapter and the individual contributors are engineers chosen because of their activity in developments and applications within the various topics. The editorial board for the first volume have set a precedent for generating the "reduction to practice" information in design technology.

The ASME Transactions are also setting precedents. A proposed new addition, the Journal of Computer Engineering, has been conceived by the Computer Engineering Division of the ASME as a hybrid journal, containing both archival material and current-interest contributions. In addition, the journal would include advertising in order to acquaint the reader with commercially available equipment, software, and services. This new venture should not, and is not, being taken lightly. The coexistence of archival and current interest material could jeopardize the treatment of a journal by the archival institutions—libraries and repositories. The use of advertising as a means of capitalizing a dramatic increase in circulation has both advantages and drawbacks. The Society's vigilance with respect to commercialism in its technical publications may be compromised. Most of the precedents being considered are the direct result of the cost squeeze in publishing, the inflation-driven divergence between the income derived from subscriptions and author page charges, and the cost of producing and distributing the journals. Because so much of the cost is incrementally attributable to the number of pages printed, authors have been subject to increasing pressure to meet page limitation requirements, and the use of the Technical Brief is on the rise.

These and many other difficult issues are being discussed within the Transactions Board of Editors and at other levels within the Council on Engineering. If the Journal of Computer Engineering is successful, existing Transactions journals may choose to follow suit. The PV&P Division has been examining the possibility of a hybrid journal—somewhat along the line of the Welding Journal, for a number of years. In view of our stated objective to serve our constituency in its entirety, a hybrid journal seems to be a modality of some merit. Unlike an archival journal, a hybrid publication places severe demands upon the volunteer segment of the Society—not on the associate editors and reviewers who handle the archival contributions (presumably, the throughput of archival information will be relatively unaffected), but on those responsible for current-interest information, advertizing, layout, and related items.

As we debate these matters your advice and counsel will be invaluable in deciding the hybrid journal issue. We welcome your input.

Robert E. Nickell