

Editorial

About half of the 20 or so comments that I have received about the quality and content of **SSR** in the last year have indicated that these respondents would like to see articles that are '*weightier with respect to the science*', '*not so philosophical*' or '*sociological*' or '*political*', and '*more geared to the ordinary teacher*'. Does this issue pass this test?

Some of the excellent articles in this issue of **SSR** are targeted at specific audiences and some are of use to all in the broad church of the ASE and science teaching. Neil Millar's *Biology statistics made simple using Excel* is targeted at teachers of Biology post-16 and yet would benefit many other teachers. It educates readers about statistics, opens up the potential of common software, and describes how to use it in enough detail for it to be slotted straight into teaching. I am sure that many readers will immediately see other applications for the information and techniques described.

Science teaching and literacy, part 1: Writing by Rebecca Staples and Russ Heselden is an apt introduction to the key stage 3 literacy strategy in secondary schools. The authors explain why this topic is important and define what is meant by literacy in science teaching; they illustrate what they have to say with classroom examples. Their article does not claim to be definitive. It is geared to the classroom teacher who has to implement the literacy strategy. Literacy and the teaching of literacy has its own technical language which at first may appear strange. The ideas presented will require practice, trial and error, feedback and evaluation, and integration in a department's scheme of work. This article is not a quick fix but it, and their two following articles in future issues, should support both the key stage 3 literacy strategy and the science strategy that rolls out for all in September 2002.

An article with a title like *Risk, environment and health: aspects of policy and practice* might have appeared to be too

'sociological' or '*political*' until such recent events as the criminal dispersal of anthrax. Justin Dillon and Peter Gill have written a clear exposition of the parameters by which people may calculate and judge risks. We all encounter teaching about risk, whatever the level we teach. This article develops teachers' subject knowledge, which is an important prerequisite for pedagogic, or professional, knowledge. It may not tell readers how to teach risk but it will certainly clear up many of our own misunderstandings about it. This article has been written up following positive feedback at a talk the authors gave at last January's ASE Annual Meeting, and is indicative of what a worthwhile professional experience that is. (This year's Annual Meeting is at the University of Liverpool, January 3 to 5 – I hope to see you there.)

These are just three examples of the scope of the articles in this issue. There are articles dedicated to teachers of physics and articles focused on teacher training and development. There is an article about the big ideas in the teaching of Earth Sciences and another raising a conundrum in the teaching of biology. Each will be grist to somebody's mill but probably not to everybody's. My plea is for some tolerance of each other's wants and needs.

Lastly, I recommend the letter from Colin Lever. It is an impassioned critique of the present science curriculum and it lays the blame for it at different people's doors. Is Colin right, and if he is what does this mean Science Year is about: enhancement or antidote to the National Curriculum?

Mick Nott