



Interfaces

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Letters

October 5, 1973

To the Editor:

This letter is with regard to collaboration between TIMS and ORSA and the recently published report of the Joint Committee from the two societies.

First, let me state my biases and expectations. I have been a member of both organizations for about fifteen years. Across those years I have gradually lessened my allegiance to ORSA and increased it to TIMS. This has been because, quite selfishly, ORSA does so little to meet my needs and interests compared to TIMS.

The joint committee reports that "Most of the papers could have been published in either journal." This is true but not to the point. One doesn't expect a professional journal to cater exclusively to his personal interests, but does expect those interests to be served to some degree. From my parochial point of view, JORSA almost never publishes an article that is useful. In contrast, from time to time a TIMS paper meets these needs or gives indications of how I can meet them for myself. Let me add that, from journals, I'm not in search of answers but of hints, of ways to ameliorate rather than for ways to optimize.

There is far more of value for me in the local TIMS chapter activities, and especially in getting to know practitioners in the local region, than in any other facet of society-oriented activities. There is no local ORSA counterpart.

Next, though I belong to several colleges of both societies, the biggest value to me has been via the TIMS College on the Practice of Management Sciences. The recent Casenovia meeting of this college was outstanding in its attention to practicality with due regard to essential theoretical underpinnings (including the psychological ones) and in its arrangements. The give and take was frequent and forceful but friendly.

I have long given up attending the full dress meetings of either society because they present too much haystack with too few needles and with little apparatus to tell us in advance what's a wisp of hay and what isn't.

Despite my feeling that TIMS gives excellent value while ORSA does not, I intend to continue to hold memberships in both societies. Any activity that has a remote chance of improving the profession and its professionals can draw my support.

To sum up to here: *I'm in favor of collaboration to bring ORSA up if the process does not pull TIMS down.* While not actively against eventual merger, I have yet to be convinced of its value.

Counter to the committee's recommendation, I urge that Interfaces continue as a solely TIMS organ completely along its present lines, with continuing attention to broad ideas and broad treatment of them.

If (as has been reported) the profession is not gaining in acceptance, it seems to

me to be through Type Three errors— wrong problems, wrong approaches, failures of empathy, supposition that elaborateness totally correlates with true sophistication, supposition that training suffices and that ingenuity can be profitably constrained to techniques alone.

It further seems to me that in the area of self analyses the two societies need to face up to an important question that I'll pose in terms of comment on footnote data from the committee's report: 251 ORSA names beginning with A, 185 TIMS names, 61 names in common. Such a set of figures gives some indication of how many people belong to one society or the other or to both— but doesn't address the question of the very many eligibles who belong to neither. What is it that keeps so many people from joining either society? What is it that keeps the societies on the chill side when compared with, for instance, the American Production and Inventory Control Society? Is any action at all being taken to get answers? Is either society or the profession consciously evaluating itself not only in terms of what it now is but of what it should be in the future?

M. J. Netzorg
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September 4, 1973

To the Editor:

I've reviewed with considerable interest the article on ORSA/TIMS collaboration. I'm perhaps a bit fearful that the motivation is for consolidation rather than collaboration, or should I say that some folks may see no need for two societies, or one's need for the other, so to speak.

As for the descriptor statistics, i.e., comparisons based on numeric ratios or expenses/member, etc., they don't seem adequate to portray some of the attributes or objectives that might be pertinent, i.e.:

- ... Of each society's membership, for those who are not members of both societies, what numbers of them are associated with foundations, the campus government grants?
- ... For those individuals with common membership, what are the similar numbers?

I believe both ORSA and TIMS have their place and that probably both might achieve certain benefits in cost reduction. But if this plan changes or influences the format of either, I'm against it even at the expense of increasing membership costs for the same services. In Cleveland some years ago, those of us who gathered together to determine which organization was most allied to the needs of our commercial/industrial

employee community, resolved that TIMS and the thrust of what it was doing represented the better solution. We, therefore, made a request to TIMS rather than ORSA to charter a Northern Ohio Chapter.

I fully admit that a little knowledge is often dangerous, but it's a two-way street and both sides can be accused of not having sufficient theoretical skills and/or concepts of problem. One often decides to force a limited or pet solution to fit the current problem. After a learning sabbatical in England, I even recall Dr. Rockoff cautioning our group to be aware of such hazards when he pointed out that there may be more gain from the study or optimization of those portions of the problem that may have been excluded in order to make the method fit. I might, therefore, ask the committee's sample and their leaving to the student their concern for the bias in the A's and the methodology, would it not have been better for them to have used an appropriately designed sample, probably one designed by those who practice the practical rather than the theoretical?

Our Chairman for the current season, Mr. Ted Ursu, has asked me, as a past president of the Local Chapter, to continue to review those "Collaboration" developments and to report to Society members at our meetings. This I shall do, and at the same time, I shall strongly urge each of those attending our meetings to provide you with their thoughts on these matters.

S. H. Troxel, Jr.
Vice-Chairman
Northern Ohio Chapter