

## 2 What direction now?

The *Nautical Research Journal* does not have an immutable format. Since the first issue in 1948 there have been many changes in the balance of the *Journal's* content. Early issues tended to have a very heavy focus on research material with rather less emphasis on model construction articles. At other times, almost all articles have presented detailed descriptions of construction processes. Nevertheless, throughout its existence the *Journal* has adhered quite consistently to the mantra: "Advancing Ship Modeling Through Research" (although its formal adoption was relatively recent).

The most consistent driver of the *Journal's* content always has been its endeavor to fulfil the needs of the Guild's membership. Ascertaining those needs, however, can be an interesting and uncertain process. The most formal method has been through the use of surveys, whose results may not always be the most reliable indicators, especially within such a relatively small organization as the Guild. Often, only a small proportion of members respond (although this was not the case with the most recent survey) but, more importantly, the small size of the Guild's membership means that replies come only from those who think it important to do so and these may not be representative of the membership as a whole.

Two other less formal means for determining members' needs are feedback from individuals and the many clubs throughout the country. The other is the range of article submissions received for publication (as opposed to those specifically solicited). Again, neither of these is necessarily a particularly accurate reflection of the requirements of the membership in its entirety.

One significant detail that is important to consider is the quite recent growth in the Guild's membership. Relative newcomers to organizations tend not to respond to surveys on the same scale as those

more established, largely because they do not have sufficient experience of the group to feel competent to reply with any degree of accuracy.

From an editorial perspective, however, growth presents some interesting challenges, since one can assume that some possibly significant proportion of new members also may be relative newcomers to the realm of ship modeling. This may mean that issues of the *Journal* should contain more content geared towards their requirements. This could take the form of material focused on building models from kits and methods to improve them through exploring research possibilities. Another avenue could be introductory articles for novice scratch builders. A third obvious option is more information covering basic approaches to both model making and research.

To some degree, the *Journal* has moved in these directions over the past few years, and especially in some of the most recent issues. So far there has been remarkably little feedback, either for or against such material, though the recent survey results suggest that it may have been positively received.

It is important for the *Journal* to respond to the membership's needs. We need to hear much more from members to know what they want from us as we work on "Advancing Ship Modeling Through Research."

— Paul E. Fontenoy