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Books for Schools

C. Gordon Winder

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Letters

Books for Schools

In the GC August 1975 issue, John Rau who is Chairman of the Education Committee of GAC, has written a penetrating review of geological education in the secondary schools in Canada. He points out that the large numbers of students will get the *maximum benefit if the teacher can provide a stimulating course, not as a rigid and orderly approach but as a science oriented investigation.* However, many of the teachers have a limited background in the subject and although their enthusiasm and motivation is commendable, their capabilities are hampering the presentation. What is the solution? The professionals in every area should be taking the initiative to contact the teachers who will welcome any assistance. Some teachers need assistance but do not know how to get it! One day I was talking to a teacher in another city. He said "What is bostonite?" I said "I don't know - why don't you call up ---" (a professor at a university in his city). The teacher had not thought of that. But I know if he does, a contact will be made and many more questions will be answered. As Jon Rau writes "These teachers may not ask for our help but they need it". The professional who takes the initiative to contact a teacher could make a substantial contribution.

Jon Rau made a significant contribution - a list of activities which any professional can initiate, with benefits which could have a profound effect. The list contains 44 different actions - and if every professional were to act upon just one, the teachers of earth science/geology in Canada would know they have the support to present a more effective course. Will the

professionals respond? Well I decided to act upon just one - #12 - make a collection of books. I asked the faculty in the Department at Western. The response was eighty books - yes 80 - many elementary texts in physical and historical geology. But in addition, books on crystallography, ore suites, paleontology, air photos, petroleum geology, history of the geological science, etc.! A book plate is pasted on the inside of the front cover including an invitation for students to telephone with their questions. The books were divided into three lots and distributed to schools where the subject is part of the curriculum. We anticipate satisfaction for everyone - the faculty, the teachers and the students - by just donating a few books which were only gathering dust.

So I say to John Rau, thank you for taking this initiative - and let us hope that all members of the profession will respond in some large or small way.

C. Gordon Winder
Department of Geology
University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario

Current Research by Computer?

For many years Geological Survey of Canada staff have compiled a useful listing of research projects under way across the country (Current Research in the Geological Sciences), relying on the voluntary cooperation of individual research leaders who provided details on a simply-designed form.

This year the form has been redesigned and our spirit of cooperation has plummeted to zero. Why?

The new form is now too long for any typewriter. Since we must therefore resort to hand-writing we are required to put every letter in one of a series of boxes, strung out in groups of 80, that magic number of the new technology; altogether there is space for 1120 alphanumeric characters per form, most of which would be needed to adequately characterise any one research project. Since a director plus two or three graduate students might well be involved in six projects, something like 5000-7000 hand-written characters would be needed, taking perhaps a full day of someone's time. So much for the labour-intensive aspects.

The shortcomings of the coding required confirm our worst suspicions of creeping bureaucracy. Our principal complaint concerns the discipline names which may be used to describe a research project; we find no descriptor for *non-engineering soil science, heat-flow geophysics, speleology, lunar geology, meteoritics, impact phenomena*; we find that a geochemist must describe his work as either *exploration or theoretical*; we find that although *geotechnique* has five subdivisions permitted, none are given to *marine science* or to *geomorphology*. But also there is insufficient space for adequate reference to publications, the geographic area coding includes all