Readers of the Autumn 2003 issue of this journal provided feedback about its content and execution. The results indicate general support for our editorial approach. In this article, we share some of the valuable feedback we received from that survey.

The dominant message from a reader survey assessing the Autumn 2003 issue of Oilfield Review was approval of the journal’s direction. In response to a question about how the journal could be improved to better meet our readers’ needs, 30% of the respondents—including both clients and Schlumberger employees—indicated they liked it as it was, or could think of no improvements to make to it. This pleasantly surprising result was supported by other responses in the survey.

The survey response rate exceeded 1% of our distribution. Roughly half the respondents were clients and the other half were Schlumberger employees, which matches our distribution. The readership spans the entire spectrum of disciplines within the oilfield services sector in which Schlumberger does business.

In the survey, which was conducted online, a few questions related to the journal as a whole while others were classification questions, such as the reader’s primary technical interests. The bulk of the survey was a series of questions asking specifically about each of the articles in the Autumn 2003 issue.

We asked readers what topics they like to read about in Oilfield Review. The most common response was of a general nature, expressing interest in reading about applications of new technology (below). This response was followed by a series of specific technology areas. As important as knowing what topics readers like to see in the journal is knowing what they do not want to read about (below right). The most frequent answer to this question—more than 30% of respondents—was along the lines of “Every topic Oilfield Review covers is fine, don’t exclude anything.”

The next most common group of responses regarding areas readers did not want to see covered was nontechnical topics, but that was somewhat balanced by those who did not want us to cover topics that are overly technical or that contain equations. We interpret this to mean that we should cover technology, but do so in a way that is comprehensible to a broad range of readers. A question that was repeated for each of the articles provided more information about the balance between these reader desires.

That question probed where the respondent placed each article on a continuum from very technical to very nontechnical. Results from this type of question are, of course, specific to the articles in the Autumn 2003 issue, but after aggregating the responses from all articles, we discerned some general trends that will help...
guide our future editorial planning. The responses ranged from 1, for nonexperts, to 7, for experts (above). For each of the six articles in the Autumn 2003 issue, about 50% of the responses fell at the neutral point: the article was neither too simple nor too complex. Although more respondents generally indicated a need for a high degree of expertise than for a low degree, the large peak at neutral indicates that we are probably achieving a proper balance. In addition, many comments indicated that the method of presenting technology is one of the journal’s main strengths.

One of our goals is to provide articles that are useful for cross-training. The distribution of responses to this question peaked at neutral, with a skew toward excellent. Although this result is somewhat reassuring, it indicates that we need to work harder to make our articles more useful for people in disciplines outside the article’s main focus area.

The distribution for a question relating to importance in the reader’s work also peaked at neutral, with a skew toward essential. The high response on the no help side was partly a result of two articles that were nontechnical or outside the normal oilfield services area, one an overview of gas markets and one on gas-to-liquid conversion. The overall result is consistent with our goal to provide readers with a broad source of information that is useful for their work, without becoming a primary technical source for experts.

All articles were perceived as less like a marketing brochure and more like a technical journal, answering a constant concern that our articles may be seen as too marketing-focused.

As responses to what readers find in the Oilfield Review that is not available in other publications, the top answer was in-depth, comprehensive articles, constituting 23% of responses. Following that, readers admired the high-quality graphics, then access to technology specific to Schlumberger. This was followed by the clear writing style, the variety of topics, application of technology to actual field examples, overall high quality, and the contributions of authors from multiple companies for many articles.

We asked whether readers thought each article was about the right length, too short or too long. For all article lengths, ranging from 4 pages to 24 pages, the vast majority of respondents found the length about right. Very few found any articles too short. In general, the longer the article, the greater was the percentage of readers who found it too long (left). Coupled with respondent comments about specific articles, it appears that article length is a determining factor in whether a respondent read any or all of a particular article. However, the overwhelming response that the article length is about right shows that our editors are generally gauging article length appropriately.

Many readers asked for on-line availability of articles, for a searchable on-line index and an index in the journal, for a glossary of terms, and for a CD archive of past issues. After seeing this list of requests, we recognize a need to improve communication with our readers, because all of these products already exist.

The full collection of Oilfield Review articles dating back to 1992 is available online at www.slb.com/oilfieldreview, as are the Spanish and Russian translations of many issues. The same site contains a link to a downloadable index in portable document format (pdf) of all articles dating back to 1989, organized by topic. Also, an article index is included in the Winter issue each year. A glossary of oilfield terms is available at www.glossary.oilfield.slb.com. These useful links can be found on the table of contents page of every issue.

Finally, we periodically produce a CD archive of all Oilfield Review articles. The most recent edition, including articles printed from 1989 to 2002, can be obtained by non-Schlumberger readers from Schlumberger sales and marketing offices. Schlumberger employees can order copies through the marketing communications Web site.

There were other requests that came from the survey. Respondents requested that we print more issues per year, or print more articles in every issue. Constraints on our budget and staff preclude printing more often, but in the very issue containing the survey, we began including more articles per issue.

We are planning another survey later this year. Your feedback to our next survey will help us further improve Oilfield Review as we strive to keep the Oilfield Review a useful tool for our readers. We want to thank everyone who participated in this survey, and encourage all our readers to participate in our future surveys.