EDITARTICLE

More than ". . . for All Americans"

There are those few times in life when we know that we have encountered something important, momentous, universal. By virtue of experience, or intuition, or some unknown force, we know. Just received in the mail, grabbing our full and immediate attention, read, and reread twice. *Technology for All Americans: A Rationale and Structure for the Study of Technology* (Technology for All Americans Project, 1996) is such a happening. Not only is it excellent in thought, design, text, and photographs, but its message is something around which all in the technology professions in America and in all the countries of the world could and should rally.

About the Publication

The suggestion that the contents have more universal applicability is not frivolous. It makes sense that the project would title this product, really a booklet of 56 pages, as it has done considering the agencies that funded the project. Or, perhaps the project staff's modesty limited the focus to Americans. Whatever the title, the content has broader applications beyond America. The following provides the context of this

In an effort to increase the technological literacy of all Americans, the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA) funded this project to develop a nationally viable rationale and structure for technology education. This effort has been spearheaded by the International Technology Education Association (ITEA) and is called the *Technology for All Americans Project*. The project's goal is to offer those who are interested in technology education a clear vision of what it means to be technologically literate, how this can be achieved at a national level, and why it is important to the nation (p. 49).

So this first publication from this project does us all proud. More than 45 years of experience, knowing and working with most of the leaders who have produced impressive and provocative conceptualizations of industrial arts and technology education informs this reporter that the current work, clearly having built on the excellent work of its predecessors, is compellingly different, and it is that difference which demands the attention of all who practice in America and in other lands. Why the difference?

First, the agencies that support the project lend credence to its timeliness and the presentation of serious considerations related to the educational need within the society. Second, a strategy that (a) solicited input from a large group of reviewers (535 names are listed), (b) presented and developed concepts with that group and others in the process of achieving consensus, and (c) saw the project staff and its visiting scholars work closely with the National Commission for Technology Education of 25 individuals, which included the project's four writing consultants.

Third, the publication itself is sharp, and it is clearly and concisely written in language that communicates effectively. The photographs and illustrations are strongly related to the written material and provide reinforcement of the ideas and concepts being communicated. Brevity has been intertwined with profundity in the four sections of the publication:

1. The Power and the Promise of Technology, which describes the need for, and then how to achieve the ideal goal of, technological literacy;
2. A Structure for the Study of Technology, which defines the elements and interrelationships of three major components of technology: Processes, Contexts, and Knowledge, each having subcomponents but all comprised in a model that provides guidance to educators in formulating learning experiences appropriate to the learner and levels of learning;
3. Teaching Technology explains how this area of study is manifested at the elementary grades to high school, community college, and the university levels; and
4. Taking Action describes some first steps that are already underway toward developing standards for the public school programs, and invites support from all venues to insure that the very values and benefits to individuals and to society that are inherent in this important area of study will be recognized so that it will take its rightful place in school studies.

To All Professionals

In this space, over the past 20 years, we have identified the need for and suggested strategies for the groups representing different interests in technology to seek opportunities for and carry out collaborative, cooperative efforts. Politics being what they are, sheer

numbers speak strongly, and one need only take a measure of the comparative influence of the large groups in certain disciplines that are represented in our schools and universities and compare those to the influence of the organizations (except for engineering) that represent professions in technology.

Technology for All Americans provides many good reasons for all professionals in technology to rally around. While several are given or implied in this gem of a booklet, the following are added for consideration: First is the notion that technology teachers and those who prepare teachers of technology and teachers who prepare technologists who will practice in industry and the technologists themselves must be technologically literate. Currently there is no guarantee that this is so. Many working in the field may be expert in a specialized area of technology, but they may fall short when they must demonstrate the behaviors expected of a technologically literate person. In today's educational and work environment and that of the future, the individual will need to be both technically adept and technologically literate.

Second, programs of excellence in the lower schools will ensure a supply of students better prepared to transition to the technology programs in the community colleges and universities. Thus, faculty at these higher levels have both altruistic reasons related to creating a better society with a technologically literate population and self-interest in that they will receive students better prepared for success in their programs.

Third, engineers, architects, technologists, and managers in the private sector have the same concerns and will enjoy the benefits of employees who can contribute to the quality, competitiveness, and productivity that is necessary in the global marketplace.

Beyond America

America is one among a cluster of countries that are technologically advanced and some in that cluster have more successful economies than America's. While the cultures of these nations are different from America's, there is much in the booklet that is applicable and adaptable to these advanced nations. There is also a galaxy of nations that are in the lesser developed category. As they advance, their educators and leaders are likely to find that the rationale and structure, and the definitions of technology and technological literacy in the publication can be adapted or modified to their unique cultural contexts. The point is that *Technology for All Americans* has more universal ramifications, and its contents speak to situations in America and beyond.

The strongest, and deserved, commendation that can be made to the project director, Dr. William E. Dugger, Jr., and his staff is to urge that this, their first product be read, studied, acted upon, and rallied about by professionals in America and in the international community. For copies, contact The International Technology Education Association, 1914 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191, 703 860 2100 (voice), 703 860 0353 (Fax), itea@tmn.com (email). **JS**

Reference

Technology for All Americans Project. (1996). *Technology for all Americans: A rationale and structure for the study of technology.* Reston, VA: The International Technology Education Association.