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Getting Into the Swim

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EDITORIAL

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Getting Into the Swim

Welcome to the first volume and issue of the *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education!* *IJARE* is the unique collaborative project of the National Swimming Pool Foundation (NSPF) and Human Kinetics (HK). More specifically, this first issue culminates a series of ongoing discussions between Tom Lachocki, CEO of NSPF, and Rainer Martens, president of HK, over the past several years. I know from my occasional discussions with Rainer dating back at least 20 years that he has long had aspirations for Human Kinetics to publish a broadly focused aquatic serial. The existence of *IJARE* today is therefore a tribute to Rainer's personal vision and perseverance in conjunction with Tom's own personal and professional support for promoting a forum for the discussion of aquatic issues.

As I have shared with colleagues who have asked, I have found the prospect of taking on the editorial challenges of helping to start up *IJARE* to be simultaneously the most exciting *and* most terrifying job I could imagine undertaking! I feel fortunate to have been involved in aquatics for over 40 years as a high school, college, and (still) Masters swimmer; lifeguard; water-safety instructor (WSI); water-safety-instructor trainer (WSIT); and member of national faculty in aquatics for both the American Red Cross and the YMCA of the USA, as well as conducting research and authoring aquatics-related articles and books. All of these previous opportunities in aquatics and water safety probably pale in comparison to the rewards and challenges of starting and editing a journal. Fortunately, serving as editor is more like being the conductor of an orchestra than a solo performer or member of a small rock band. In addition to the friendly and helpful staff at NSPF, the dedicated and professional editorial and production personnel at HK's Journals Division, and the ScholarOne technical support group, there are the supportive members of the *IJARE* editorial board, the many selfless reviewers, the eager authors, and, of course, you, the subscribers and readers who all work together to create this endeavor. The degree to which *IJARE* becomes a success will mostly be a tribute to this large group of dedicated collaborators.

Goals

You may be wondering what we collectively are hoping to accomplish through the publication of the *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education*. That is an especially appropriate question to ask and answer in this introductory editorial to the first issue. One simple way to answer the question is to refer the reader to our journal mission:

IJARE publishes original research reports on people's use of aquatic facilities and participation in noncompetitive aquatic programs. The journal also publishes informative [professional education] articles about the teaching and learning of aquatic knowledge and skills.

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I am personally committed to making *IJARE* more than simply a publication outlet for both research and professional aquatics articles. If we all do our jobs, *IJARE* can serve as *the* forum for identifying, discussing, and perhaps resolving major issues, challenges, and questions confronting the field of aquatics. Partly because of the ongoing innovations in digital technology, including our use of ScholarOne's Manuscript Central for submitting, reviewing, and revising articles for the journal, I think we have a tremendous opportunity to promote exciting and productive discussions both in print and online. My commitment, of course, can only be fulfilled if readers and authors are willing to take advantage of this opportunity to submit research manuscripts, educational ideas, review articles, letters to the editor, position statements, calls for research, and other creative writings. I promise to entertain any legitimate ideas that any of you are willing to propose.

In line with the goal of nurturing an aquatics discussion forum, as well as a rigorously refereed publication, I should admit to a personal bias that underscores my professional commitment to *IJARE*. It has been my observation that the field of aquatics has long suffered from a deficit of conceptually and factually based research literature. I recall my Purdue University master's advisor, Dr. Marguerite Clifton, telling me that she really didn't like "aquatic people" as staff or students because she felt that they (we) were too narrow and specialized and that we usually failed to consider research and practice from other areas of human movement. At first I was insulted by and skeptical of Dr. Clifton's comment, but I gradually realized that, unfortunately, her observations did have a ring of truth. I have worked personally to be an exception to this generalization by endeavoring to integrate findings from diverse fields or disciplines that offer possible explanations, theories, or new ideas applicable to aquatics. For whatever reason, too often we "aquatic people" indeed have failed to either conduct our own research or to integrate research from related fields such as psychology, pedagogy, or kinesiology. We instead have primarily relied on *tradition*. Too often we have followed practices handed down generation after generation without ever even performing a logical analysis to see if these practices make sense.

For example, for the longest time, our typical lifeguard-training programs required trainees to learn and practice skills while viewing the drowning victim as a potential adversary. We had to learn skills such as blocks, parries, and front underwater approaches to victims in preparation for doing battle with them. I believe I recall that a student of Ralph Johnson at Indiana University of Pennsylvania was able to track these practices to a program in the British Isles dating to the early 1800s (personal communication). It wasn't until the mid-1980s that several aquatics professionals decided that we might learn something by observing or surveying professional lifeguards to discover what kinds of skills they actually used when making rescues. It became immediately obvious from the interviews that no lifeguard ever actually used any of these rescue skills that consumed most of our time in lifesaving or lifeguarding classes. Instead, this applied research discovered that practicing lifeguards had developed a series of simple and effective rescue procedures that usually involved taking along a rescue buoy or tube to support victims and themselves in the course of making a rescue. Fortunately, the American Red Cross, Ellis and Associates, United States Lifeguarding Association, and YMCA of the USA all realized the wisdom of modifying their programs to simplify rescue procedures, making them safer and more effective. The downside was that it took

over 150 years to arrive at those conclusions and make these changes. I believe that this example is not unique but an ample exemplar to explain why we need to nurture research and disseminate it broadly. It also highlights the need for a forum such as *IJARE* through which broad discussion of information, ideas, and controversies can occur.

World Aquatic Health Conference

Just before completing this editorial, I enjoyed the wonderful opportunity to travel to Austin, TX, to participate in the World Aquatic Health Conference (WAHC), an enterprise of the NSPF, one of the partners in publishing this journal. Over the years, I have participated in a wide variety of professional aquatics conferences including a number of memorable ones sponsored by the now-defunct Council for National Cooperation in Aquatics (CNCA). I think the WAHC is serving as a very worthy successor to the CNCA conferences. The WAHC presentations, if anything, covered more diverse topics than those we used to have at CNCA back in the “old days.” Most of the sessions I was able to attend certainly represented and discussed rigorous and sound scientific aspects of aquatics. Topics ranged from public health issues such as recreation water illness to physiological effects of aquatics on aging to innovations in water purification to water safety and lifeguarding topics. In fact, to me the WAHC sessions illustrated an excellent “in-person” and annual version of what I hope *IJARE* eventually will represent quarterly in print and online. I also discovered at WAHC that there were many exceptions to Dr. Clifton’s former criticism of aquatics specialists who were too narrow in their outlook and applications. I met a wide variety of scientists and scholars, as well as practitioners in the fields of public health, medicine, engineering, exercise physiology, gerontology, and psychology and aquatics professionals who all were taking a broad scholarly view of the field of aquatics. It was a heartening experience. I encourage all readers to consider attending, either in person or online, the next World Aquatic Health Conference, which will be held in Cincinnati, OH, during early fall of 2007. More information about WAHC will appear in future issues of *IJARE*. The online version of the WAHC is a far-sighted innovation by NSPF to accommodate people whose schedules or budgets limit their ability to travel. As with this past conference, all future sessions will be videotaped for digital transmission to online registrants.

IJARE: A Force for Change in Aquatics

I feel strongly that, despite all the great advances we are making in aquatics—as represented by the WAHC, for example—we still need to do a much better job of modernizing all aspects of contemporary aquatics, including areas such as our aquatic-instruction and water-purification methods, aquatic facility and equipment construction, and other aquatic program practices. It is my intent to push *IJARE* to become a force for change in aquatics: as a locus for publishing significant research findings, for articulating unique and innovative ideas, for challenging current practices or proposed changes, and for disseminating information about the latest and best equipment and facilities. I think this will be an exciting adventure for all of us.

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In line with my perceived long-term needs for aquatics, *IJARE* invites and welcomes submission of research reports that study

- Health and safety of people's participation in all types of aquatic activities
- Aquatic technology, including facilities, equipment, and supplies
- Participation in aquatic activities, including the factors influencing participation and the consequences of participation for various populations
- Instruction of aquatic knowledge and skills

For the Research section of *IJARE*, your submitted manuscripts are reviewed by a member of the editorial board and other reviewers with expertise in the topic or field of your study. We will accept or reject manuscripts based on their appropriateness to *IJARE*'s stated editorial mission and the manuscript's adherence to appropriate scientific methods and writing quality. I think it is important to state up front that I view my role as editor to be a developmental one. I am not going to fall into the trap of thinking that our manuscript rejection rate must be high in order to have a high-quality, rigorous journal. In line with my goal of encouraging a broad-based aquatics discussion forum, I intend to provide feedback to authors so that they can revamp manuscripts that initially might need a better conceptual basis or improved writing.

In the Education section of *IJARE*, we intend to publish professional articles that, strictly speaking, do not employ an experimental design or otherwise use typical scientific methods. Instead, we invite all types of professional manuscripts that might focus on a variety of aquatic topics from water safety to experiences teaching aquatic knowledge and skills to facility design and staffing issues. These educational/professional manuscripts might take the form of topical review articles, experiential reports, clinical and observational studies, literature reviews, and, certainly, editorial statements of opinion. As with the traditional research studies, the professional manuscripts are reviewed by members of the editorial board and other qualified reviewers to determine their perceived contribution to an understanding of all areas of aquatics. As with research manuscripts, I intend to work closely and developmentally with authors of professional articles to ensure the highest quality communication of their ideas.

If you feel that you are not necessarily a great or even adequate writer, I still invite you to explore topics and manuscripts with me on an individual basis. I might be able to help you expand or refine your ideas in a manuscript or perhaps pair you with a colleague with whom you can work collaboratively. I feel that it is of the utmost importance to get our many ideas and opinions about aquatics out of our heads and into the public forum for discussion and consideration. We each need to ask ourselves, which is worse—having a great, but private, idea or opinion that we never share with others *or* possibly getting some criticism about the validity of our idea when we publish it?

In that vein, I encourage you to read the various articles that you find in this inaugural Volume 1, Issue 1, of the *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education* and to let me know what you think. Remember, *IJARE* is using a publishing approach rarely attempted before: to place research articles side by side with educational/professional articles. This approach is our effort to provide information and ideas about current aquatic practices that might be germane to the interests of

our diverse aquatic practitioners, as well as to advance our knowledge in aquatics by helping aquatic researchers understand the areas needing to be investigated. If you find an article with which you vehemently disagree, please consider writing a rebuttal manuscript or letter to the editor for publication in a subsequent issue. I will do my best to get commentaries, rebuttals, and letters to the editor in the next available issue to keep the discussion alive and fresh. It's up to you to provide the grist for our discussion.

In Volume 1, Issue 1

In this Issue 1, you will find a variety of informative and provocative research articles pertaining to aquatics. We start out with Annie Clement, a scholar, lawyer, and strong aquatic advocate, and her collaborator, Kadence A. Otto, who have co-authored a treatise on liability issues related to spinal-cord injuries resulting from headfirst entries into water. Kevin Johnston, from the University of Idaho, examines the efficacy of certified pool-operator training on the quality of pool chemistry. Tomas Leclerc, the aquatic coordinator at Alabama A&M University, then presents a study comparing the front surface rescue approaches used by Red Cross and YMCA lifeguards. Betsy Nagle and co-authors, from the University of Pittsburgh, offer the interesting results of their research sponsored by the NSPF comparing the value of standard walking exercise with that of a combined aquatic exercise and walking program for women in a weight-loss program. A very different type of aquatics article is the one authored by Karen Rippe and her collaborators. Their study provides the results of their NSPF-sponsored survey on enzymatic activity in pool and spa products. For those involved in fitness or Masters swimming, the article examining lactate testing for competitive swimmers by Stasinios Stavrianeas with the assistance of his undergraduate students might be of interest to you.

This first issue also contains two educational articles. Lee Yarger, Ball State University's aquatic director, concludes our first issue with two provocative submissions. The first focuses on the importance and need for aquatic managers to do comprehensive background checks on prospective staff members. He then challenges the national aquatics agencies to consider changes in lifeguard certification, with the possibility of a more advanced "professional" level of certification.

Next, in an invited review, Gerald Dworkin, an aquatic consultant, provides an advocacy article on the need to be prepared to escape from a submerged vehicle. Good reading to one and all!

I'll be writing to you again in the next issue.

Stephen P. Langendorfer, Editor