

PREFACE

Seymour Papert
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, MA

It has become clear that the Logo community needs a forum for papers like those in this collection. The LOGO 85 Steering Committee discussed the idea of launching a full-fledged journal with a slightly expanded version of the collection serving as Volume 1 Number 1. In the end, we decided on a less structured arrangement. There will be no fixed publication dates. Papers are invited for submission and will be published when ready. Manuscripts can be of any length. Larger ones will be put out individually (like the old MIT LOGO MEMO series), and smaller ones will be combined into collections. We hope that people will take the initiative in proposing and organizing collections around themes. Two advantages of a regular journal are a name and an editorial board. These publications are provisionally named LOGO STUDIES. A board of editors will be set up during LOGO 85.

No formal definition can be given of the range of papers that will be acceptable. Certainly, it is neither necessary nor sufficient that a paper be explicitly about Logo. Nor are we proposing to create an open forum for every kind of discussion of education. We have to assume that there is a sufficiently strong sense of being part of "the Logo culture" for contributors and subscribers to know by family resemblance whether this is for them or not. And conversely, the existence of LOGO STUDIES will shape the future growth of the Logo culture.

Why now? A few historical remarks on timing and precursors might help thinking about what this publication series ought to become.

The Logo movement we know today was scarcely recognizable in the embryo that already carried its name in the late 1960s. There were no turtles and no graphics. Arithmetic was infix and in integers. Multiplication was left to students to write as an interesting mathematics project. We had not yet learned to introduce Logo to young children: students in the experimental classes in the 1960s were more typically in junior high than in elementary school. And, most strikingly, there was not yet either a community or a culture. It was a period of gestation. Logo had been conceived but not quite born.

The 1970s were a period of growing up in the protective environment of a cozy family. Ideas flourished and a small but energetic Logo family grew. A need for publication became apparent and two series of papers were started in the MIT Artificial Intelligence Laboratory: the LOGO MEMO series, whose back numbers are still actively sought, and the more informal LOGO WORKING PAPER series which has slipped into the archives (carrying some very interesting material with it that I hope someone will revive one day).

This kind of publication was ideal for the tempo and size of the community as it was then. The papers were longish, informal pieces written at a leisurely pace for friends. When one happened to be ready,

it was reproduced in the simplest available way. They were sent out to a small Logo network in the United States or exchanged for similar papers from a few new Logo Labs that had begun to develop, notably in Edinburgh, in Montreal and in France. There was a steady, slow growth of ideas.

In the early 1980s, the pace changed. The long-awaited microcomputers were here. It was like moving into adolescence. Pressures were different. Some of us who had been incubating ideas over the years felt the need to get them out in forms that could be taken up by what already looked like the beginnings of a mass movement. The long, leisurely paper for a LOGO MEMO no longer felt appropriate. Ideas were either elaborated into books or put out quickly by writing short articles, giving lectures or interviews -- and even by getting involved with the actual production of Logo implementations. The LOGO MEMO series came to a stop.

There is now a swing of the pendulum and the need for a modern form of what we had through the 1970s. The publication of books and the presence of Logo on a large scale and in varied forms in the schools has created an intellectual climate in which ideas are taking root and proliferating. This climate is further stimulated by a broader awareness that there is a crisis in education which technology ought to be able to help. In addition, we are beginning to see the first stirrings of a serious critical movement that will challenge us on a deeper intellectual basis than the superficial debates and emotion-driven criticisms we have had up to now.

Uri Leron, in his contribution to the present collection, talks about a gap in the flow of Logo ideas. As I see it, we have not witnessed a gap, but an incubation phenomenon. A new situation was created in which it became possible for a much larger Logo community to take form. Three or four years is not too short a time for this community to grow from birth to the stage of having a need for self-expression like the smaller Logo family had in the 1970s. Thus, I expect the LOGO STUDIES to revive and wonderfully extend the function for which we started the LOGO MEMO series fifteen years ago.