

## PRESENTATION

In this issue, *INTERFACE* faces a challenge: to bring material that *reflects* - both in the sense of mirroring as in that of examining its own content - the reason for its very existence. This issue establishes a significant arena for understanding the possibilities of the enormous amount of configurations that are being developed and redeveloped at the end of this century and millennium in the field of information.

An intelligent sequencing of the material provides the reader with a unique opportunity for coming into contact with a theme that opens with a well-founded examination of current communication, and that closes with an exciting discussion on books and their readers in the twenty-first century. Occupying a space polarized by this debate on texts, what is communicated to the reader is an extensive, rich and well-founded proposal to approach themes whose core focuses on the new meanings of the network idea; on political conditions that apply to articulation, communication, education and information; on the role of the press in narrating an epidemic event; and on the renewed discussion of the relationship between biomedical logic, plant therapies and popular medical lore in the use of medicinal herbs. The debates on transdisciplinarity in evaluating services, the interview that deals with the training of professors and the other reports and summaries in this issue, to the best of my understanding, concisely convey the underlying intent of this publication: *to deal with education as a project, a vocation, and the possibility of building a fair and democratic society.*

The contents of this issue have share a commonality of themes, forcing us to reexamine these central issues, spurred by the articles themselves.

First, let us consider education as a *project*. If we look at the project from Sartre's point of view (*"The issue of method"*), i.e., project and subject form a dialectic unit, because "man is defined by his project", overcoming "eternally the condition that he is born into", disclosing and determining his circumstances, "transcending them to become objective, by means of work, action, and gesture", we will be proposing education as a process rooted in the past, regarding the present, but looking upon the future as the process of becoming. In this sense, we cannot divorce an understanding of education from social and technological dynamics, which leads us to pedagogical and educational possibilities unthinkable only a few decades ago. In practice, from confined knowledge - the era of manuals - one evolves toward knowledge not only distributed across the broadest range of vehicles, but knowledge that is also becoming virtual. As explained by the

theoreticians of this field, the information era will force us to exit the “state of presentness”. This view, however, should not lead us to delude ourselves. Recently, John Robert Schmitz (*Folha de São Paulo* newspaper, July 18, 2000, A3) warned us about the dangers of the digital era, reminding us that only three out of every one hundred Brazilians own a computer. This excludes thousands of people from coming into contact with modern communication networks. He refers, furthermore, to the fact that both young and adult users spend time on sites with “little or no informative or instructive value”. Therefore, the “state of presentness” continues to be our reality and, as Marques Neto stressed, we must be prepared for the changes that are taking place in the world of books - the “third book revolution”, the revolution of the electronic book, which follows the first revolution, resulting from the invention of the press, which, in turn, led to the second one, the dissemination of reading matter. The third revolution will advance toward a different relationship between reader and text: hypertext and the inevitable “computer screen civilization”. However, as we have already mentioned, this possibility may still take some time and, as stated by Roger Chartier, according to Marques Neto, the most probable scenario is the coexistence, for some decades to come, of text in manuscript form, printed publications and electronic text.

The second issue, which concerns approaching education as a *vocation*, leads us to look upon the latter not only as technique, but also as the locus for reflexive social and political training. In this sense, it appears to us that the initial concepts developed by Ribeiro to assess the dimensions of the network notion strengthen the connection with educational processes, those that refer to “the mediation between materiality and social action”, without forgetting the nexus that are to be established through new technologies. Valla’s text is undoubtedly of paramount importance, showing us how to work with fundamental categories, solidarity and welfare support, as guidelines for the vocation of developing teaching in the field of healthcare.

Finally, education as a *possibility* refers to trying to understand education itself as an instrument, to regard it both as a free-standing element (a set of norms, procedures and paradigms, or, in other words, a specific process that is a part of global social dynamics) and as an inclusive process. To find out how education is situated in the historical and social process, and its commitment to technological progress, yet without abandoning its human obligations, seems to us to ensure its role vis à vis rapid change and dehumanizing, globalizing policies.

It is no easy task to tie together, in a few paragraphs, the complexity of educational processes during times of deep transformation, such as the present. Nor is it easy to reveal the thematic diversity of this issue. As our readers may realize, their greater pleasure will not derive from the words of this Editorial, but from following the careful exercise of those who research and relay to us their knowledge of education and healthcare, in addition to exercising the art of teaching. They are able to make us continue believing in the possibility of combining knowledge and action to build a better world.

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