FROM THE EDITOR

Living With Change

by Richard F. Walters

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T he M community has prided itself over the last two decades as being a proponent of change. Although M is not new, it continues to surprise the rest of the world with its unique, practical, and elegantly simple solutions to many problems considered vexatious in conventional programming languages (remember Tom Munnecke's elegant analogy of sail planes becoming increasingly simple in outward appearance as designs became more sophisticated?). Despite its forward-looking stance, M continues to evolve, and the clamor to move ever further forward is no less strident today than it was ten years ago.

Change requires changes in attitude on the part of those users accustomed to, and comfortable with, the "old" version. Change is not only healthy, it is essential, but at the same time, change should not be undertaken for its own sake.

These comments are written as I reflect on this issue of *M Computing* and as I look forward to 1996 as a year in which we will be testing the waters of change once again. And now, perhaps more profoundly than in the past, we look with some uncertainty as to the outcome of decisions such as moving time, place, format, and content of the M annual meeting. I am also reminded of the winds of change as I look at Ed de Moel's interesting reflections on "backwards compatibility" and the new revisions to FileMan (V. 21 discussed in Rick Marshall's column). Change is strongly implied in the article by Arden Forrey and Walter Biggs, who point out that the M community needs to become increasingly involved in standards deliberations that will affect the M language and its environs in the years ahead. We can't just sit around and hope change won't happen. In this and many other cases, if we aren't part of the decision-making process, we are likely to be unhappy with the result.

Yes, the winds of change are blowing strong and gustily around the flagship M. We cannot count on calm waters in the next few years. Instead, it looks as though we will be bracing for more unexpected blows from all points of the compass. I, for one, welcome these winds, but I also know that we must have a firm course set so that we can make best use of the forces of change to assist us in reaching our goals.

These reflections boil down to an absolute necessity for each of us in the M Community to increase our involvement in those places where we can help most as individuals, each in the unique way suited to our own talents and energies. My plea to each of you, therefore, is to raise your level of involvement in M a notch this next year. We need your participation, your voice, your attendance, and, above all, your guidance as we head into the uncharted waters of 1996. **M**

Richard Walters, Ph.D., is a professor at the University of California, Davis and the executive editor of *M Computing*. Write to him in care of MTA's managing editor.