**Hypothesis Big Picture**

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The “big picture” is a familiar phrase to those of us in graduate school. We hear it from committee members, supervisors and others. It is defined by an attempt at stepping back, away from technicalities, to pause and conduct an overall review of the project, and to pinpoint its place in the scientific enterprise. I think such interest in the big picture should be used for an analysis of the journal *Hypothesis* as well, and for a discussion about its future direction. The success of *Hypothesis* due to the excellent performance of its editorial team, bring the question of direction as a very fundamental one for those who take this journal seriously and believe it capable of growing as a student journal.

In the very first sentences of the editorial in the first issue, we read that *Hypothesis* is: “a peer-reviewed journal that focuses on the sharing and discussion of novel, interdisciplinary research and ideas within the University of Toronto.” Nothing is said of it being by, for, or about students, primarily graduate students. Yet judging by the composition of the editorial board, the contents, and the readership, I would say that is what *Hypothesis* is about.

A fundamental question is what kind of identity *Hypothesis* is claiming. *Hypothesis* has the potential to capture a distinguished place as a prestigious graduate student journal. Rather than copy the format of other scientific journals, since it was initiated by graduate students, *Hypothesis* is capable of representing a student voice in a dynamic and scientific environment. I am not suggesting that professors cannot publish in *Hypothesis*; on the contrary, articles from professors raise the value and prestige of the journal, and create a milieu in which science really rules. I refer to an environment in which students and professors can relate to it and both can discuss things.

If *Hypothesis* chooses to be a graduate student journal, the next question becomes whether if it intends to stay as a local one, with a local audience, as mentioned in the very first issue, “within the University of Toronto”, or whether it may wishes to extend its borders. *Hypothesis* is now publishing from students in different disciplines, but its editorial board is mostly from Medical Biophysics and is financially sponsored by three departments, indicating that it is gradually expanding within the University of Toronto. Becoming a journal that extends the entire U of T is itself a good goal. But why not aim to reach all universities in Ontario and, perhaps, Canada? Where should this restrictive line be drawn? The line can be drawn considering a few criteria: the culture of the scientific community, the environment surrounding that community, and the policies that govern it. Policies are made by provincial governments, and sometimes are different across the provinces, but with respect to research and graduate schools, Canadian research institutes across the country share a very similar culture, issues and policies. Financial resources, which are the engine of research and graduate studies, come from the same national agencies and thus are uniform across the country.

Thus, I propose that *Hypothesis* see itself as a Canadian journal. The lack of networking in a scientific environment across Canada hampers research; a national student journal can initiate a viable network among young scientists who will be tomorrow’s scientists and will work all over the country in different sectors.

Aiming to become a national journal takes a serious commitment and I would like to briefly mention some of them.
Journal’s content, language, and intervals

Hypothesis would ideally be diverse and include different sections such as: News, Canada industry, scientists’ Career prospects, ideas, reviews, research articles, and finally a section for everybody under a title such as Comments, in which we can contribute opinion pieces on different subjects from the social life of graduate students to previous articles and to university or research issues. And the magazine would ideally be bilingual so that it generates the same chance for francophone students in Québec and New Brunswick and other parts of the country to produce new ideas and interact with each other. A national journal cannot publish only two issues a year, and eventually it needs to accomplish the goal of becoming a quarterly or a monthly journal.

Financing issues

In order to become a solid student journal there is a need for strong financial base. This might be the biggest challenge for Hypothesis. The approach for financial assistance first needs to go toward the departments; within the U of T, this has already started and then universities in the second step. Universities should be convinced that financing a national scientific student journal is a step forward in upgrading the scientific environment of the universities, and the allocation needed will be insignificant compared the university’s general budget. Advertisements can also be a reasonable source of financing this journal, but the type of advertisement that the journal attracts is a crucial issue. Universities can advertise for their programs and degrees especially their graduate programs, and post doctoral positions. Industry can also advertise for their opening positions. The question of whether industry should be allowed to advertise their research products or not needs to be thoroughly analyzed by the editorial board.

Organizational structure

The journal needs special committees to oversee and implement the development of a national student journal. There is a need for a special finance committee from students and professors, who actively search for different resources from three levels of departments, universities, and industry. An outreach committee will complete the task of reaching out to different departments of the University of Toronto within a period of 18 months. The next step is reaching out the universities across the province and the country. On the other hand it is essential for a professional journal to have professional journalists. In this case, the journal would benefit from access to graduate students in the field of journalism, for whom it can provide excellent to practice professional journalism in Hypothesis. Within a period of four to five years Hypothesis can transform to a national monthly student journal.

Within the last three issues, Hypothesis has published delightfully educational articles; and those were the product of primarily one department, and a few from other disciplines and departments, but from a single university. Imagine a journal, which is the product of hundreds, if not thousands, of students in bio-related fields across the country. How many new ideas and brainstorming subjects would then be brought to our professional life?

The picture that I draw may look somehow far from today’s reality, but in order to be successful we need to know the direction, and work for it and bring it to reality. In order to perceive where Hypothesis will be in the years ahead, we need to lay the groundwork today. Especially for those of us who want to work in Canada as scientists after our studies, there is a need for a graduate student voice in scientific environment of Canada, and Hypothesis can be that voice. And it would be a delight to see that voice is originated from Medical Biophysics and U of T. This can only be accomplished, however, by a serious commitment from not only the editorial board, but also everybody who believes in this cause from Medical Biophysics and other departments of U of T. If we reach out to other graduate students in bio-related fields there will be hundreds of graduate students across Canada who are ready to help.

The picture of a Canadian graduate student journal in bio-related sciences, is not a dream, it is the necessity of today’s scientific world and the reality of tomorrow. If Hypothesis loses this chance there will be some other journal from some other part of Canada, which will achieve this. We could hypothesize that Hypothesis can be the first national scientific graduate student journal in bio-related field within a reasonable time line.