When we were asked to guest edit this special theme issue of The CATESOL Journal on content-based instruction (CBI), we seized the opportunity to showcase the interesting work in this area taking place around our state at all educational levels—elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and adult. In this journal edition, we seek to raise important issues in CBI, describe current content-based practices, and suggest directions in which this approach might evolve in the future. In designing this edition, we decided to look forward, opting to build on previous work in language and content integration, rather than retell its history. Throughout the issue, however, are references to earlier work in CBI; we invite readers to explore these references to provide context, both national and international, for the work here in California.

We also decided to use this theme issue as an opportunity to cast the net widely and show the relationships between CBI and other approaches which are currently generating interest in California. Accordingly, we asked experts in such areas as cooperative learning, whole language, and the teaching of culture to discuss the relationship between their work and CBI. We also looked to English for specific purposes (ESP), vocational English as a second language (VESL), and sheltered English, where the connections are a bit more obvious, in an attempt to uncover the similarities and delineate the differences among these related endeavors. We believe that this type of bridge building reveals a broadly based foundation for content-based teaching at all levels of instruction and suggests a great variety of approaches to improving instruction for language minority students.

As in the regular editions of The CATESOL Journal, there are three sections to this special issue: Articles, CATESOL Exchange, and Reviews. The Articles section presents a comprehensive treatment of four key topics in content-based instruction: syllabus design; student needs, interests, and motivation; testing; and literature as content. The Exchange section augments the full-length chapters by covering a wide variety of practical issues in CBI and, as mentioned, considers the relationships among related approaches. We designed this section as a true exchange, a dialogue of sorts with the authors who shared their perspectives and experiences across different levels of instruction. The third section, Reviews, examines current ESL/EFL textbooks designed for either sheltered content or content-based language instruction at a variety of instructional levels, ranging from the elementary setting to preuniversity and university levels. Some
of these texts are designed for multiskill instruction; others emphasize a single skill such as vocabulary or writing while also suggesting ways in which students can practice other skills.

We think that this issue represents the state of the art in CBI in California. The rich variety of ways in which the principles of CBI are being applied at all educational levels is indeed impressive. We would like to encourage others working in CBI to join the dialogue by sharing their experiences at annual CATESOL conferences, in CATESOL News, and in future volumes of The CATESOL Journal. For those new to this instructional approach, we hope that this issue will inspire them to try content-based teaching in their classrooms. And finally, while we have designed this special issue with ESL teachers in mind, we hope that readers will share relevant articles with colleagues in the content areas and in the workplace in an attempt to build the bridges which are at the heart of content-based teaching.

Marguerite Ann Snow and Donna M. Brinton
Guest Editors

Syllabus Design in Content-Based Instruction

This paper explores the relationship between content-based second language instruction and so-called communicative language teaching and traces the development of syllabus design for second language courses from its emergence as an issue in the mid '70s to the present day. The paper argues that content, when combined with a concern for communicative function and grammatical structure, provides the missing third dimension in syllabus design for second language courses and generates course designs superior to those based on structure alone or on some combination of structure and function. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of the problems in, and the prospects for, developing this kind of syllabus for such courses.

Communicative Language Teaching, Content-Based Instruction, and Syllabus Design

In a brilliant, if somewhat neglected, paper the late H. H. Stern (1981) identified and discussed two major, and largely unreconciled, versions of what had become (and still remains) the dominant approach to second language teaching, that is, “communicative” language teaching (CLT). One—mainly European (and, especially, British)—he dubbed the L- (for linguistics) approach, because it derived from new kinds of linguistic analyses—not analyses based on linguistic forms like phonemes, morphemes, and syntactic structures but analyses based on such semantic elements as notions and functions and particular speech acts. The other—mainly American—approach he dubbed the P- (for psychology and pedagogy) approach, because it derived not from any kind of linguistic analysis but from studies of learners and the language-learning process. This approach is mainly concerned with establishing the kinds of conditions under which learners learn second languages best and the kinds of activities most likely to facilitate second language learning.

Since the L-approach generated a new kind of content for language courses, it led naturally to work on syllabus design, to what Munby (1978) called communicative syllabus design, and to the work of Wilkins (1976), Van Ek (1975), and many others on so-called notional syllabuses. Since the P-approach was based on process studies, it led