Yearbook is lacking in technique

Technique 1984, the yearbook of the students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Volume 100.

Here's the good news about Technique 1984: It's a lot of yearbook for your money. At 436 pages, the long-awaited Centennial Volume weighs in as the largest student publication ever. At 436 pages, the long-awaited Centennial Volume weighs in as the largest student publication ever. And, of course, it includes excerpts from the previous 100 volumes. Technique is not an error; there were two one-year. This year's book is a celebration of MIT's history as well as the past year's happenings.

Now for the bad news about Technique 1984: With such a lot to choose from, the book should have been the best ever. Regrettably, the editors tried to include so many different things that they were unable to print enough of anything to give the reader pause for thought. There are some stunning photos, but they are buried among unimaginative portraits and clichéd landscapes. Technique 1984 contains lots of the photos every student in Creative Photography I takes and every publication at MIT uses: Lobby 7 from above, the entrance people silhouetted against the glass door, and the campus spread out beneath the Green Building; the joy of victory, the agony of defeat, and the thrill of watching the 2.70 contest.

Seniors who remember Technique 1982's ill-fated experiment of cropping the hair and ears from the senior portraits will be reassured to find that their photos, although small, are clear and complete. There is hardly any imaginative cropping anywhere in this year's Technique; most of the photos are perfectly centered about their most prominent feature. The historical material is copious, often dull and rarely identified by a date; who cares what percentage of MIT students were juniors and sophomores in 1924? What went wrong? The yearbook staff would have done better to reprint some essays in full, or to reproduce Stone and Webster's 1916 guidebook to the newly-built Institute. To compound the injury, it is poorly integrated into the modern sections. There is a photo, taken from inside the Great Dome, of students studying at Barker Library's old tables, which are arc-shaped to fit the room. But there is no corresponding image of Barker's grotesque new decorating scheme, nor is there an explanation of what happened to the tables.

As in the past two years, the seniors were asked to sum up their MIT experiences for the Seniors section. Technique was apparently unable to take a lesson from last year's disappointingly anonymous essay section; again, they failed to link the lines with their authors. I'm not sure why. The book would have been markedly improved if these personal glimpses had been edited or eliminated entirely. Personals without being individual, they reveal nothing about MIT or their authors. A few examples will suffice: "My experiences have been good in all respects other than financial." "MIT is a trained-monkey factory." "Laughter is tremendously healthy."

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SUMMER POSITION AVAILABLE

WHERE: Storage Systems Group
Digital Equipment Corp.
Shrewsbury, MA

WHAT: Control of Positioner in Rigid Disk Drive
Analog Circuit Design
Simulation of Servo System

REQUIREMENTS: BSEE from MIT
available from June through August 1984

Diana ben-Aaron