
The Year Past, the Years Ahead

Reprinted from *THE SCIENTIST* © 1(23):9, 19 October 1987.

When launching *The Scientist* one year ago, we promised readers a unique publication—the first newspaper for science professionals. We said it would be filled with useful information that scientists and policy-makers could apply in their daily work. We promised news and features found nowhere else. What's more, we promised an attractive newspaper with arresting color illustrations, an accessible tabloid format, and concise, crisply written stories that respected the time of busy researchers and administrators.

Thanks to the dedication and professionalism of our staffs in Washington, D.C., in Uxbridge, England, and in Philadelphia, and the excellent work of our contributing correspondents worldwide, I am gratified to observe on this our first anniversary that we have delivered on these promises. I wish to acknowledge as well the support of our global network of distinguished scientists who served and who continue to serve on our editorial consulting board.

Moreover, the readers themselves have done much to ensure our success thus far, and not only by subscribing.

We consciously fashioned *The*

Scientist as an interactive forum for our readers. But success in achieving that goal depended on the involvement of the scientific community and the willingness of individuals to submit opinion pieces and letters. We were not disappointed with the response to our call for opinions; since the second issue we have had many more letters and opinion pieces than space available for their publication. It was plain from the start that we had fulfilled a real need.

Looking back now over 22 issues, I note that our Opinion and Feedback pages have been filled with controversies—about sequencing the human genome, building the Superconducting Supercollider, teaching “creation science,” pursuing the Strategic Defense Initiative, and formulating science policy in developing countries, to name only a few. Not only are the opinions authoritative, since they come from professionals deeply involved in the various issues, but they are also stated forcefully and are, frankly, fun to read. Taken together, our Opinion and Feedback sections, shaped wholly by our readers, provide a forum for the professional concerns of scientists that is unique. With these sections we have forged a personal link with and among

members of the science community.

A penchant for personalities pervades our paper, as it should with any professionally oriented newspaper. The feature Personal Communication offers autobiographical sketches by prominent scientists that reveal moments of discovery, the joys and tensions of collaboration with colleagues, and important lessons learned during a lifetime of research.

In our Face-to-Face interviews with influential scientists and policy-makers, we've brought to our readers the views and something of the personality of those who are making the news. For example, we secured the first formal interview with William R. Graham after he assumed the post of President Reagan's science adviser. While featuring a number of leaders in the U.S. scientific enterprise, we did not neglect their counterparts abroad, such as Sir George Porter of Britain's Royal Society, Professor Sergei Kapitza of the Soviet Union, and the controversial Professor Fang Lizhi of China. This perspective carries over to our news pages as well and for our recognition of the true international nature of science we have received much praise.

It should also be noted that our news staff was first with a number of stories last year, such as the reasons behind the resignation of Donald Frederickson from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. *The Washington Post*, for example, followed our lead on this important development. That's the mark of a good professionals' paper—first

with inside information, setting the agenda for news coverage of other publications.

Among other "firsts" last year: an article revealing which of the National Science Foundation's new engineering research centers are likely to get good grades, months before their formal evaluation; a story about the bitter internal rift among committee members putting together a National Academy of Sciences report on the use of animals in research; a compelling piece about the impact of scientific papers shown to be fraudulent on the lives and careers of unwitting coauthors; and early intelligence on the locations most likely to be in the running for the Supercollider site.

We've also been unique in focusing on information our readers can use, especially in our Tools section, where we've reported on how to design and furnish a laboratory, how to keep electronic lab notes, how to write a textbook or a review and how to lecture effectively, among other subjects. We extended that effort with the addition of our Employment column, which has recently featured insights on resume preparation and interviewing techniques, and information about scientists who consult and those who are returning to research after time away from the bench.

We aim in the coming months and years to build on our past successes. Our editorial content will evolve in tandem with the information needs of our readers. We listen to our readers' request and take their suggestions seriously. Furthermore, we

are continually surveying our readers to learn what features they find most useful and what sort of new features they would like to see. As a responsive publication and in essence a reflection of the community it serves, *The Scientist* will in no way remain static.

Evidence of that continuing evolution can be found in this very issue. We are introducing software reviews, which will extend the already diverse media we now monitor—not just books, but also new journals and special issues of journals, conference proceedings, museum exhibits, television programs, plays and films. With this issue we are also introducing a section on new products.

In future issues, we will launch a series of profiles of research institutions. Each will report on a specific institution's activities, its strengths and weaknesses, and the scientists and administrators who shape the character of the place.

And we'll continue our series of occasional articles on military research labs and on major professional societies, such as our past stories on the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Sigma Xi and the American Society for Information Science.

In short, our readers can expect more of what we already are: a true trade newspaper for the world's scientists.

Having now established a unique,

high quality editorial product in a convenient and attractive format—and having received the plaudits of our readers—we plan in the coming year to exert more energy getting the word out to advertisers about who our readers are. A recent survey of U.S. subscribers revealed that they are overwhelmingly scientists in the life, medical and physical sciences, working in both academia and industry, who typically earn well above average salaries. They also control substantial budgets, usually exceeding \$100,000 and sometimes in excess of \$1 million.

I believe these are the kind of readers who will bring more advertisers to the door of *The Scientist*. Readers should be assured, however, that additional advertising pages will enhance our news and features. Both serve similar functions in bringing science professionals information they need to know.

Continued attention to our editorial content, advertising and circulation will, I am sure, guarantee the long-term success of *The Scientist*. But again I would add that our dependence on the enthusiasm and contributions of our readers is paramount. So I invite those of you who have been with us for the past year and those who have recently discovered us to send us your opinion pieces, your letters and your suggestions for improvement. *The Scientist* is your forum. ■