
Science in 1992: What Can We Do To Resolve the Uncertainties?

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As *The Scientist* enters its sixth year of publication, it faces a task that its staffers and I engage with energy and optimism. We are determined to further the publication's success to date by continuing to provide a unique news and career information vehicle for all members of the science profession.

Our optimism and energy stem, to a great extent, from our healthy 1991 performance as measured against two important periodical publishing benchmarks: circulation and advertising. During the past year, when many other publishing efforts have fallen victim to these troubled economic times, *The Scientist* has succeeded in relation to its objectives. Indeed, while some consumer and specialized trade publications have suffered fatal declines in circulation and advertising, we have experienced significant gains in both areas.

We view our strength—and this is confirmed by the communications we receive from readers and advertisers—as a blend of several distinctive factors. We're the only newspaper exclusively addressed to science; the editorial staff is dedicated to writing clearly and with sound ethical motivation about the

issues of concern to today's researchers; the focus of every item is pertinent in some way to the career considerations of all readers; and we are aware that good science cannot be conducted in a social vacuum. While other journals may do an excellent job of publishing research results, no other publication centers its attention on the matters of professional and ethical consequence that condition the environment within which today's research is conducted.

In 1992, we will continue our coverage of the people who currently excel in the science community as well as the young researchers who will be the leaders in years to come. We will continue to publish stories on salaries, employment trends, and methods for men and women to improve their careers. And we will continue to explore—as no other publication does—the social and professional controversies that impact progress toward a successful and enjoyable scientific career.

Despite our optimism, we recognize that the task is especially formidable as we enter this new year, for perhaps never before has the science profession been so complex. Before I began college a generation

ago as an aspiring chemist, I was totally unacquainted with today's concept of a "professional scientist." Most of us who planned scientific careers knew very little about government or philanthropic funding of research, and we had little concern for the broader political, social, financial, and ethical issues that confront the novice researcher of today. We aimed to satisfy our intellectual curiosity, to do good where we were able, to work diligently and honestly, and, incidentally, to get paid for our efforts.

Today, through media exposure alone if nothing else, young people have learned much more about the various worlds of science. They know that most science funding comes from the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, or industry—and they know that the path toward gaining financial support for their work contains many obstacles. Why, one

might wonder, should anyone begin a career in research these days with all of its attendant problems and uncertainties? *The Scientist's* major task is to continue probing these problems and uncertainties in an effort to support its readers in their quest for successful, satisfactory careers.

Science is not perfect, nor are its practitioners. And it is not a universal blessing: We recognize science as having great potential for good but are also aware that it can be, and has been, abused. Yet overall, science represents the best of what the human endeavor has to offer—the search for truth, knowledge, and enlightenment, for the betterment of all beings.

More good science and more good scientists serve the greater good. And so we dedicate our work in the new year to fighting the good fight on its behalf. ■