

Report of the Committee on Publications for the Year Ending June 30, 1999

Rosalind Reid, Editor of *American Scientist*, reports that technological advances have both facilitated the production of the magazine and enabled it to enlarge its activities.

Currently a third of the magazine's pages are being produced by a "direct-to-plate" process whereby color printing plates are composed directly from the digital files created in the office. This eliminates the intermediate stage of photographic film. Although the process is not yet reducing costs, it improves printing quality and in the future will reduce the printing "turnaround" time. That will enable the staff to produce a magazine that is more current. Both business and editorial staffs have collaborated in changing the work flow to phase in the new process.

Moreover, over the past year the transition to a mixed-platform computer network was fully realized, bringing the magazine and the rest of the Sigma Xi organization closer to a fully integrated paperless office network.

In the magazine's pages the year began with a focus on the transition to electronic communication in science. Appropriately the second on-line *American Scientist* Forums, taking its cue from the September-October 1998 cover article, concentrated on the electronic publication of scientific research. At the end of the year the Forum was continuing and was expected to be abstracted in book form by the Association of research Libraries. The Forum e-mail "listserv" discussions, which focus on articles in the magazine, are led by volunteer moderators recruited by the Sigma Xi and *American Scientist* staffs, with support from the Sigma Xi Committee on Programs. The discussions are announced in each issue. At this point the experiment is a mixed success, and the organization of the on-line discussions is likely to be revamped in fiscal year 2000.

American Scientist articles continue to attract wide attention. The March-April 1999 issue took an unusual look inside a long-running genetics experiment in Siberia, which attracted follow-up articles in *The New York Times*, *Der Spiegel* and other publications. *American Scientist* presented the first review article by scientists working on the discovery of neutrino oscillations (May-June 1999) and two articles explaining major advances in molecular biology ("How the Ribosome Works," September-October 1998 and "The Evolution of Hemoglobin," March-April 1999). Readers were treated to a lively science-for-children insert in the November-December 1998 issue through a cooperative venture with the magazine *Muse*.

Meanwhile traffic on the magazine's Web site, which since 1995 has provided worldwide access to sample text and illustrations and an index of magazine contents, continues to be strong. Also available on the Web site is the *American Scientist* Forum. During the year inquiries about Web-site advertising, which is expected to be offered in the near future, have increased.

The magazine's revenue's increased by some \$20,000 during the year; largely as a result of a turnaround in advertising sales. In May 1998 Sigma Xi discontinued the use of advertising sales representatives and moved advertising sales in-house. The change was an immediate success: Advertising sales increased 32 percent from fiscal year 1998 to fiscal year 1999. The unaudited increase in income was from \$154,104 to \$204,063, from 47 to 59 advertising pages.

In addition, Sigma Xi began this year to enjoy the revenues generated by projects launched in fiscal year 1998. Thanks to a new contract with the Copyright Clearance Center and the publication of two article collections by Sinauer Associates, royalties and permission revenue nearly doubled to \$28,078 (unaudited). These increases offset a small decline in the number of single copies of the magazine sold to some 11,000 per issue and a small decline in circulation of 1,800 (reflecting a decline in the membership of Sigma Xi). Overall the staff is pleased with the magazine's more closely targeted distribution, which has increased to 33 percent the "sell-through" percentage: the proportion of magazines distributed that are purchased. *American Scientist* is now sold by the single copy in 41 countries.

In March 1999 a new catalogue of publications and other merchandise available from Sigma Xi was produced. Orders began to arrive in April, and sales have been quite good, totaling \$10,000 (unaudited) by the end of the year. *Honor in Science* continues to be the Society's top seller, followed by Sidney Harris cartoon books, Sigma Xi golf shirts and the *American Scientist*/Sigma Xi T-shirt.

There were two staff changes on the magazine during the year. The Marketing Assistant position held by Crystal Lineberry was ably filled by Jennifer Dorff after Crystal left for graduate school. To fill the vacancy left by the departure of Mike May in the fall, David Schneider, a geophysicist and a member of the *Scientific American* Board of Editors, was hired as an Associate Editor.

American Scientist staff members participated this year in the activities of the Society of National Association Publications. Managing Editor David Schoonmaker was a judge for the 1999 SNAP EXCEL awards competition; and Associate Publisher Kate Miller was elected to the Association's Board of Directors for 1999-2001.

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