

## Report of the Committee on Publications for the Year Ending June 30, 2000

Rosalind Reid, Editor of *American Scientist*, reports on a year of recognitions and milestones for the magazine.

The magazine was honored with a Bronze Award for General Excellence by the Society of National Association Publications. The award was given on the basis of the three issues published during the second half of calendar year 1999.

A Special Edition of the Scientists' Bookshelf, a review of the significant science books of the 20th century and their impact on the lives of scientists, was accomplished with the help of Philip and Phylis Morrison and a variety of contributors who remembered how books had shaped their view of science. The Morrisons' essay has since been widely cited, discussed by them on National Public Radio and republished in *ScienceWriters*.

The brisk traffic on the magazine's Web site continued to grow during the year to a dramatic peak in June, when the popular computer-discussion site <slashdot.org> launched a discussion of Brian Hayes's latest "Computing Science" column, attracting some 10,000 visitors in a single 24-hour period. Patterns in the Web logs suggest our on-line content is used extensively, as we might hope, by students writing papers. Users interact with our site for an average of 10 minutes and 24 seconds per session. Overall "hits" in the magazine's directory average over 600,000 a month.

The first significant staff turnover in the past decade allowed a revamping of roles and an infusion of ideas, energy and technical talent that will give the magazine the flexibility needed for adapting to a digital future. New staff members are Tom Dunne, Art Director; Barbara Aulicino, Graphic Artist/New-Media Designer; Flora Taylor, Book-Review Editor; and Rebecca Sloan Slotnick, Book-Review Editorial Assistant/HTML Specialist. Two of the names will be familiar to readers. Tom Dunne had contributed to the magazine as a free-lance illustrator since 1992, and Rebecca Slotnick accepted a permanent position after serving as an editorial intern.

Finally, the magazine's technical evolution reached a new plateau this year with the full and smooth implementation of a "direct-to-plate" process whereby color printing plates are composed directly from the digital files created in the office. The printing contract with Lane Press was renegotiated in May 2000; as a result, pricing on value-added services is locked in at current levels and protected from inflation through the May-June 2003 issue. The magazine's computer network infrastructure was also upgraded this year to facilitate the handling of large files in-house.

In the editorial pages, a number of notable feature articles made for a parade of strong issues. Major policy issues, including climate change, embryonic stem-cell research, the environmental impact of animal production and the restructuring of America's electric-power industry, were informed by discussions of their scientific and engineering aspects. Cutting-edge research, from the exploration of newly discovered Lake Vostok under the Antarctic ice sheet to the quest to develop DNA vaccines to treat cancer, was described by scientists doing the work. We celebrated some of the delightful recent surprises in science: cliffs as unique ecological niches, simulated solar prominences created in the laboratory, mathematical solutions to the problem of efficient ways to fill space. We also celebrated historical benchmarks, such as the maturation of radiocarbon dating over half a century. And we looked for interdisciplinary connections, such as the lessons that the developers of nanomachines might find in the evolution of nature's biomolecular machines.

Associate Publisher Kate Miller reports that advertising sales remained very strong with \$200,107 in revenue (unaudited) and 53 pages sold. *American Scientist* continues to handle all advertising sales in-house.

Sales of publications and other merchandise available from Sigma Xi totaled \$27,524 (unaudited). As in FY1999, *Honor in Science* was the Society's top seller, followed by Sidney Harris cartoon books, Sigma Xi golf shirts and the *American Scientist*/Sigma Xi T-shirt.

Single-copy sales will surpass those for the 1999 fiscal year. During FY1999, 64,139 copies of *American Scientist* were sold on the newsstand. Although final numbers for the May-June 2000 issue are not complete, retailers have reported that the first five issues (July-August 1999 through March-April 2000) sold 61,289 copies. *American Scientist* is currently sold in 43 countries.

Among the staff's professional activities, Kate Miller completed her first year of service on the Board of Directors of the Society of National Association Publications.

The Committee on Publications met once during the year, to review the magazine's operations and discuss future directions, at the Sigma Xi Annual Meeting in Minneapolis. All members were present.

Dennis Flanagan, Chair  
Josephine A. Morello  
Peter Blair  
Rosalind Reid  
Roger T. Hanlon  
A. F. Spilhaus, Jr.  
Lawrence M. Kushner

