

Report of the Committee on Publications for the Year ending June 30, 2001

National downturns in advertising, society membership, magazine sales and e-business made the 2001 fiscal year a challenging one in which to be publishing a scientific magazine or journal. It was nevertheless a strong year for *American Scientist*; these trends have made the magazine's mission and role more important, if anything, and Sigma Xi's role in science communication more significant. The magazine's quality and importance were recognized in the world of prizes and awards. First, a generous gift from the Greenwall Foundation of New York endowed the first prize to be awarded by *American Scientist* to its authors, in honor of Sigma Xi Past President George Bugliarello. The prize will recognize interdisciplinary articles in *American Scientist* dealing with connections among biology, society and machines.

In addition, two articles recently earned writing awards given by other societies. The Mathematical Association of America's prestigious \$1,000 Chauvenet Prize for 2001, given for an outstanding expository article on a mathematical topic, went to Carolyn S. Gordon and David L. Webb of Dartmouth University, authors of "You Can't Hear the Shape of a Drum," which had been published in the January–February 1996 issue. It was only the second time in its 77-year history that the Chauvenet Prize was given for a magazine article. In physics, the American Astronomical Association awarded the \$500 Solar Physics Division Popular Writing Award to Paul Bellan of Caltech for "Simulating Solar Prominences in the Laboratory," which appeared in the March–April 2000 issue.

Meanwhile the most obvious enhancements to the magazine and its Web site this year came in the area of visual presentation. Under a new Art Director the magazine began to take on a brighter look, with an increase in the liveliness and variety of illustration material, already regarded as the strength of the magazine. An overhaul of the *American Scientist* Web site was accomplished at the turn of the calendar year, providing a streamlined, more attractive user interface and organization that will facilitate future growth. Traffic on the Sigma Xi/*American Scientist* Web site grew again this year. We received the most traffic ever during the month of April 2001 with 1,545,694 successful hits, 383,140 page views, and 136,906 user sessions. (About 87 percent of the traffic handled by the main Sigma Xi server is generated by the *American Scientist* pages.)

The artwork accompanied an intentionally broad array of feature articles, some touching on policy issues (conservation, urban sprawl, biological weapons control, transgenic crops, international scientific collaboration), others on history (Cold War scientific spying, the origins of dendrochronology, Millikan's controversial oil-drop experiment, uncertainty in habitat conservation), but most reviewing research in the social, natural and applied sciences, from particle physics to gene therapy to mathematics.

What began as the Year of the Human Genome was celebrated in a Special Edition of the Scientists' Bookshelf in the January–February 2001 issue, critiquing "The Books of Life" a publishing craze that accompanied the release of human-genome maps and revealed many unresolved societal issues and scientific questions related to genes. The "gene book-o-mania" issue, sporting a striking X chromosome on its cover, turned out to be our most popular number on the newsstand to date, selling 17,649 copies.

It was in fact our best year ever on the newsstand. Four issues beginning with May–June 2000 sold a record number of single copies. (Data are not yet available beyond January–February 2001.) The other three record-setting issues were September–October 2000 with 16,880 copies, November–December 2000 with 16,151; and May–June 2000 with 14,303 copies. During calendar year 2000, 85,748 copies of *American Scientist* were sold on the newsstand, an increase of more than 13 percent over the previous year. The magazine is currently sold in 43 countries.

Unfortunately, recent advertising trends have affected our magazine, and ad revenue for the fiscal year fell slightly to \$177,495 (unaudited) with 46 pages sold. This resulted in a decrease of approximately 10 percent from the revenue generated in FY2000.

Among staff professional activities, Kate Miller continues as a member of the Board of the Society for National Association Publications. In August Rosalind Reid attended the Tenth International Conference of Science Editors in Rio de Janeiro to speak with other editors about possible initiatives in scientific communication under Sigma Xi's Packard Foundation grant for international science networking. Rosalind also moderated a panel on "Scientific Evidence: Junk or Cutting Edge Science?" for an October symposium at the University in Michigan; spoke on authors' rights at a conference on Electronic Distribution and Digital Rights Management sponsored by the International Productivity and Quality Center in January; and presented a slide talk, "Picturing Research," at two Sigma Xi spring chapter banquets. Art Director Tom Dunne participated in a conference launching the Image and Meaning Project at MIT in June.

There was little staff turnover this year. One position was open for much of the year while Associate Editor Michelle Hoffman took leave to pursue graduate study, and during the search for a new editor when Ms. Hoffman decided to resign. The position has been filled by Karin Jegalian, a biologist and formerly a science writer at the National Human Genome Research Institute, who will arrive in September. The magazine also benefited from the contributions of its first illustration intern, Emma Skurnick from the University of California at Santa Cruz, whose work graces the March–April 2001 cover.

The year came to an end with the publication by Sinauer Associates of a third edition of Exploring Animal Behavior, the most popular teaching collection of *American Scientist* articles. The collection is widely used in

undergraduate classes. Sigma Xi receives royalty revenue from this and other permitted uses of material from *American Scientist*; royalty and permissions revenue reached \$30,639 (an increase of 62.5 percent over FY2000) this year with the initiation of a new contract, through the Dialog Corporation, to provide the magazine's digital text to the BBC's research library. During the year the magazine staff has reviewed other third-party agreements and begun canceling those that are not remunerative. Other revenues came from sales of T-shirts, Honor in Science and other Sigma Xi items, totaling about \$12,000, and from mailing-list rentals.

The staff is particularly pleased when *American Scientist* articles generate news coverage of research in the popular media. This year's articles led to coverage of work reported in the magazine in publications including *Newsday*, *The New York Times* and the *Detroit Free Press*, as well as follow-up broadcast and online coverage by media outlets including ABCNEWS.com.

The Committee on Publications met in December at the Society's offices in North Carolina to review the magazine's operations and discuss future directions. All members were present. In addition, the Committee reviewed a Web-services proposal from a subsidiary of The Lane Press, printer of the magazine. The proposal remains under consideration at this writing.

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