

Report of the Committee on Publications for the Year ending June 30, 2003

Sigma Xi's magazine had an unusual year of activity and accomplishment in fiscal year 2003. A long process of study, discussion, planning and implementation involving staff and leadership culminated in the launch of *American Scientist Online*, a full-featured Internet service providing the illustrated full text of current and past issues of the magazine along with electronic newsletters and online-only content, as well as new services for members, institutional licensing and online advertising support. *American Scientist* was honored with three national awards again this year. At a time when the magazine industry is struggling to pull out of a sustained economic slump, subscription and advertising revenues both increased, and newsstand sales remained strong. Finally, through a new arrangement with four European publishers, *American Scientist* articles began appearing regularly in German, Spanish, Italian and French translations throughout Europe, extending the magazine's impact and recognition.

Honors

The Society of National Association Publications awards prizes for editorial and design excellence in its annual EXCEL Awards competition. This year *American Scientist* earned SNAP's Silver Award for General Excellence, along with a second Silver Award for Design Excellence, recognizing the quality of the magazine's illustration and visual presentation. "Ethnoclimatology in the Andes," an article by Benjamin Orlove, John Chiang and Mark Cane that was published in the September-October 2002 issue, was recognized with a Bronze Award in the Feature Article competition.

Operations

The development of *American Scientist Online* was accomplished with a modest increase in staff and extra effort from magazine and other Sigma Xi staff. Early in the fiscal year, following committee and Board of Directors review, a Web-services agreement was signed with 4Lane Digital, Inc., now Lane Press Digital Services, establishing the project as a joint venture in which 4Lane would provide technical development, business support, design and implementation and host the site, while Sigma Xi would provide and own all content. Revenues generated from business activity on the site, except subscription revenue, is to be shared by the parties.

The first step toward the Web site was the debut of a low-bandwidth magazine text archive, the result of work begun by Sigma Xi and 4Lane the previous year with \$30,000 in support from the Packard International Scientific Networking Initiative. Served separately by Sigma Xi, the low-bandwidth text archive is a complement to the illustrated online archive especially for Sigma Xi members and partners in developing countries who have limited access to the Internet. The project entailed the conversion, correction and uploading of nearly five years of magazine content to an XML (Extensible Markup Language) file format. 4Lane Digital designed and implemented a database where this content is stored so that it can be served in both text-only and illustrated forms.

The new staff members in charge of developing the full-featured Internet service arrived in July 2002. They are Gregory Ross, the Web managing editor, who served as chief liaison and project supervisor during the design and building of the site by 4Lane Digital/Lane Press Digital Services; and Katie Lord, business development manager, who was charged with designing and implementing advertising, licensing and marketing programs to generate revenues and provide member services.

In August book-review editorial assistant Rebecca Slotnick departed for graduate school. The position was filled by Frank Diller and upgraded to encompass the production duties associated with the new online magazine archive and provide a full-fledged assistant editor for the Scientists' Bookshelf and new online book features. Finally, Associate Editor Karin Jegalian departed in December 2002 for family reasons. An editorial intern, Margaret Pizer, filled in while a new Associate Editor, Christopher Brodie, was recruited.

All staff, particularly the art staff, took on additional duties during the process of launching *American Scientist Online*. However, the editorial staff kept as its primary objective maintaining and enhancing the quality of the magazine itself. Surveys of Sigma Xi members and other readers conducted in fall 2002 indicated that the highest value is placed on feature articles and the magazine's visual quality. Partly in response to reader interest in scientific illustration, a new department "Sightings," produced by MIT photographer Felice Frankel, was added to the magazine with the May-June 2003 issue.

Another service launched this year is Science in the News Weekly, an electronic newsletter offered through *American Scientist Online*. An extension of Sigma Xi's daily Science in the News e-mail roundup of science news, the Weekly provides visitors to the online site a weekly analysis of science news coverage and also is designed to be a vehicle for advertising.

Other Staff Activities

Associate Publisher Kate Miller completed her service on the Board of Directors of the Society of National Association Publications. In November Editor Rosalind Reid gave an invited presentation on the low-bandwidth text project to the Round Table on Developing-Country Access to On-Line Scientific Publishing: Sustainable Alternatives, sponsored by UNESCO and the Third World Academy of Sciences. In May Ms. Reid was selected as the first Journalist in Residence at the Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics at the University of California, Santa Barbara, which will entail a three-month residency during fall 2003. Editorial staff also gave workshops at the Annual Meeting and Student Research Conferences, helped with judging of a student research conference and participated in alternative-career workshops for graduate students in the sciences.

Finances

The average circulation per issue remained relatively stable at 90,000 this year, approximately 76 percent of readers being members of Sigma Xi, 17 percent purchasing the magazine on the newsstand and 7 percent being non-member subscribers. Circulation revenue for the fiscal year was \$236,885 (unaudited), an increase of 15 percent from the previous year. The additional revenue resulted from an increase in the annual institutional subscription rate from \$50 to \$65.

Some 95,184 copies of *American Scientist* were sold on the newsstand during calendar year 2002. The average sell-through rate, the percentage of distributed copies sold, was 53 percent, 15 percentage points higher than the industry average. Sigma Xi increased the newsstand price of the magazine by \$1.00, beginning with the September-October 2002 issue (\$4.95 in the US; \$5.95 in Canada). Revenues from newsstand sales during the 2003 fiscal year were \$121,000 (unaudited), an increase of 32 percent from FY02. The magazine is currently sold in every state in the U.S. and in 40 countries. It is available in 97 percent of all Barnes & Noble bookstores and 90 percent of all Borders bookstores, among others.

It was also a good year for *American Scientist* advertising. Fifty pages of advertising were purchased during FY03, bringing in revenues of \$202,832 (unaudited), an increase of 18 percent over the previous year's advertising sales. The auto manufacturers Toyota and Subaru, the U.S Army, book publishers and software companies were regular advertisers. *American Scientist Online*, which will carry paid advertising as well as promotions for Sigma Xi events, programs and membership, launched in May with two paid advertisers and an affiliated bookselling program, the Scientists' Bookstore, an arrangement with Barnes & Noble that will provide online book discounts for members and other subscribers as well as revenue to the Society.

Additional revenues were generated this year by a new contract for inclusion of *American Scientist* Content in Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCO) library databases and by the republication of more than 30 translated articles in European magazines. A comprehensive copyright database was developed this year to support the acquisition of electronic rights and facilitate the expansion of such re-use arrangements in the future.

Respectively submitted,

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