

Report of the Committee on Publications for the Year ending June 30, 2006

2005-06 was a lively year in the pages of *American Scientist* and an active year for the magazine's staff, which continued to pursue cost-containment measures and explore new business strategies.

Operations

Editorial Operations: The editorial staff was stable this year and was thus able to fully implement workflow and design changes instituted during FY2006 and focus on inviting, editing and illustrating excellent articles, book reviews and essays. The year's notable invited articles included "A New Understanding of Protein Mutation Unfolds" (July-August 2005), "Biofilms" (November-December 2005), "How Gecko Toes Stick" (March-April 2006), "The Interplanetary Transport Network" (May-June 2006) and a soccer-ball mathematics article that coincided with the quadrennial World Cup competition in June. Among the articles attracting notice during the year were "Group Decision Making in Honey Bee Swarms" (May-June), which served as the basis of an article in *The New York Times*, and "Yawning" (November-December), which was selected for inclusion in *The Best American Science Writing 2006* (HarperCollins). The Bookshelf attracted a particularly eminent cast of reviewers this year.

The electronic newsletters provided free of charge as part of *American Scientist Online* continue to grow in popularity. At the end of the fiscal year, *Science in the News Weekly* had 7,926 subscribers (an increase of almost 1,500 over the year), the *Scientists' Bookshelf Monthly* 5,096 (up more than 1,000) and *American Scientist Update* 2,333 (more than double the subscribers at the end of FY2005). *American Scientist Online* continues to generate a significant amount of traffic. The site averages more than 114,000 unique visitors (up from 92,000 last year) and more than 2.1 million page views each month.

Business Operations: A major accomplishment during FY2006 was a method to measure nonmember subscriber retention utilizing the database extracts made to create mailing labels. Looking at the May-June 2005 issue and the May-June 2006 issue, the staff found that *American Scientist* had an excellent overall subscriber-retention rate of 76 percent. Seventy-six percent of those who were mailed the 2006 issue had been mailed the 2005 issue. Of the two classes of subscribers, institutions had a stunning 91 percent retention rate; the rate among individuals was 70 percent. The retention rates for domestic and foreign subscribers were 76 and 75 percent, respectively.

Finances

Unaudited circulation numbers for FY2006 indicate that the magazine's circulation is holding fairly steady. The most recent audit report, for the 12 months ending June 30, 2005, shows that *American Scientist's* average circulation per issue grew slightly over the previous annual report to 82,905 (up 458 copies, or 0.6 percent). Newsstand circulation climbed an average of 1,621 copies, or 12.7 percent, to 14,359 per issue, and nonmember subscriptions inched up by 74, or 1.2 percent, to 6,290. Approximately 75 percent of readers are members of Sigma Xi, a decline from 77 percent in 2004. Seventeen percent purchase the magazine on the newsstand, and eight percent are nonmember subscribers.

Nonmember subscription revenue for FY2006 totaled \$256,256, an increase of 8.8 percent. Newsstand sales increased not only in total value but also in the sell-through rate (the percentage of distributed copies that are sold), which rose from 24.3 percent to an estimated 28.4 percent. As a result, newsstand sales generated \$160,215, an increase of 49.2 percent.

Advertising declined in FY2006. Total revenue was \$144,467, down 15 percent from the previous fiscal year. As a result, the staff decided to sever Sigma Xi's two-year relationship with the James G. Elliott Co., advertising representatives, and to take a new hybrid approach to advertising efforts. The bulk of the advertising will be maintained in-house, with an outside firm, MKTG Services, handling a specific category (book publishing). The staff hopes to give more categories to the new firm as it proves its capabilities to bring in new advertisers. The new structure will begin with the January-February 2007 issue.

This year the operation of *American Scientist Online*, previously funded by a net draw on endowment, was folded into the regular operating budget, recognizing its role as a core service to members and a significant outreach vehicle for the Society. This became possible when Sigma Xi amended its Web-services agreement with Lane Press, moving from a revenue-sharing arrangement and per-download fees to an economical monthly fee.

American Scientist Online revenue from advertising, site licensing, e-commerce and PDF file downloads totaled \$50,784, up 1.6 percent. Advertising represented the bulk of the revenue, but a sizable portion came from institutional site licenses, which increased from 44 in FY2005 to 67 in FY2006.

Editorial costs were held this year to a level below the FY2002-05 average. Manufacturing costs were reduced by targeted newsstand distribution and a decline in membership numbers. However, average cost per copy increased slightly between the first and second halves of the fiscal year, from 50 cents to 54 cents, owing chiefly to an industry-wide increase in paper costs that was only partially offset by a change in text paper.

This was the first year of a new arrangement with European magazine publishers requiring advance payment for *American Scientist* articles reprinted in translation. Interest in foreign-language re-use remained steady, although income fell slightly as the new arrangement was implemented. European magazines republish about 40 articles per year under an arrangement that provides the magazine an average of 15,000 euros in income.

Other Staff Activities

Editor Rosalind Reid co-organized, with Wayt Gibbs of *Scientific American*, a panel discussion "Peer Review: A Look Behind the Curtain," for the annual meeting of the National Association of Science Writers in October 2005. She participated as keynote speaker in the first Sigma Xi chapter-sponsored symposium on publishing at Lehigh University in November 2005, followed by a symposium on scholarly publishing and a panel discussion on popular communication of science at Drexel University in April 2006, also co-sponsored by a Sigma Xi chapter. Four members of the editorial staff also participated in the first Image and Meaning mini-workshop on the visual communication of science, co-sponsored by Sigma Xi with Harvard and MIT and held at the Sigma Xi Center in June 2006.

The business staff exhibited on behalf of *American Scientist*, the online site-licensing program and Sigma Xi at the 2005 Society for Neuroscience Annual Meeting and American Library Association 2006 Annual Conference.

Committee Activity

The Committee on Publications met June 13, 2006 in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. In addition to an operational review, the committee discussed progress on the Bugliarello Prize, the formulation of a statement of purpose for the magazine and the new hybrid model for advertising sales. Katie Lord introduced the idea of an "In-home Scientist" column, written for recruits to Sigma Xi's new Affiliate category as well as Sigma Xi members. The new column would be included in an e-newsletter to the affiliates, posted on American Scientist Online and published in the magazine. A prototype of the column will be developed in order to show potential to a sponsoring advertiser. Also, Editor Reid presented a proposal from JSTOR to retrodigitize the entire back run of the magazine. The JSTOR contract is under negotiation at this writing.

Respectively submitted,
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