

Comment

With the publication of this second edition of *Science Dimension*, it's a good time to state again what we are, who the magazine is written for, and the nature of the enterprise we report on — science. Our science beat, as most of you know, is the research done at NRC, the research NRC supports in industry, and university science funded by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC). Given the broad approach to science at NRC and the eclectic tastes of our university and industrial laboratories, *Science Dimension* has a scope that should appeal to all reader interests, however disparate.

During 1983, we are moving to increase the magazine's circulation. The audience of special interest to us are people in industry and students in upper high school and the universities. Our circulation list now contains relatively few in these categories but we hope to change this.

In our view, *Science Dimension* will continue to be as relevant to scientists and engineers as it is to businessmen, students, and others outside the worlds of research and development. An industrial chemist, for example, may find our stories on industrial chemistry too simple; but he or she will get a great deal out of anything we do on astronomy, building research, or seaweed farming. Scientists have trouble enough keeping up with publications in their own highly specialized fields without tackling other disciplines in depth. Hence the value of *Science Dimension* to them. We intend, therefore, to please our professional readership at the same time that we attract our new audience. For the marketplace entrepreneurs, the men and women who translate ideas into saleable products and services, *Science Dimension* will be a means of keeping abreast of developments in science, and it will treat them to stories of how research has benefitted their counterparts. For students, the young people whose career decisions will largely determine the future health of Canadian science, the magazine will serve as a window on the national science scene. Of late, shortfalls in the number of science and engineering graduates have been forecast for the mid-'80s, particularly among women who are already badly under-represented in these fields.

But our aim is more than showing science's practical value. We also hope to impart some idea of just how exciting science can be for the people who do research. It is not, as television and movies often suggest, the purview of numbers-oriented eccentrics who live dry, determined lives with little time for humor or music. A look inside any laboratory will dispel such myths. Scientists may live in worlds of bizarre glassware and abstruse machines, but these are only the surface trappings of a much deeper, richer realm. All science, not just the whiz-bang quests of planetary flybys and comet probes, is an adventure of the *mind* as much as it is mastery over matter.

When scientists examine their computer readouts or follow the trace of a recorder pen across a graph, they see well beyond the data itself to the 'paradigms' or models that give meaning to their fields. Part of their excitement lies in what the new information does to these concepts. It can verify them, or cause them to shift in ways that lead to newer, perhaps more revealing, configurations. Take the stories in this issue. There is an astrophysicist in Victoria whose tabulations take him out to distant galaxies, the very distances providing him with clues to just how old the cosmos really is. On the Prairies, a geneticist sifts data from pea plants that allow him to see more clearly the rules the living cell plays by when it juggles genes. And in Ottawa, chemists speculate on how vitamin E blocks the path of renegade particles that wreak havoc on the cell's outer membrane. The quests of science, then, are as intriguing to researchers as the most compelling of mystery novels — with the added dimension that the evidence they sift often points to universal truths.

In future issues, we will be taking you on many of these journeys of the mind. Science, like art, music, and other aspects of culture can be appreciated by *all* of us, not just scientists alone!

Editor

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This publication is available in microform.

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