

CURRENT SCIENCE

Volume 76 Number 5

10 March 1999

EDITORIAL

Current Science

Readers may have noticed that some recent issues of *Current Science* have been substantially thicker than usual. This sudden spurt in the size of the journal is an unanticipated result of an increase in the number of submissions to special sections, together with the steady increase in the number of papers accepted through our normal procedures. In order to maintain an acceptable size, we intend to tighten editorial procedures over the next few months. In particular, strict limits will be imposed on submissions to the Correspondence, Commentary, Opinion, Book Reviews and Historical sections of the journal. The authors of Reviews, Research Accounts and General Articles will also be encouraged to be economical in their use of journal space. Thus far, this journal has been very liberal in permitting illustrations in colour at no cost to the authors. Indeed, colour figures do add to the overall attractiveness of a publication. We would urge authors in future, to use this facility economically. In cases where the excessive use of colour is requested, the costs of production will at least partly, have to be borne by the authors.

Current Science's ongoing battle with obesity has highlighted the fact that many authors write with little regard for their readers. A short, punchy letter which makes a specific point is more likely to be read by a large audience, as compared to a verbose piece, which states and restates many well-known generalities. Commentaries and Opinion pieces must be sharply worded; succinct analysis is certainly likely to evoke a greater reader response, than a long winded essay, whose purpose is often unclear. The Book Reviews section is a powerful medium for thoughtful reviewers to sometimes reflect on the status of the specific discipline treated in the book. Cataloguing of the contents alone, does not make for good reading. In opening the pages of *Current Science* to the discussion of controversial topics, the intention was to provide a forum for debate on issues concerning science and scientists. Brevity and clarity

are essential ingredients for stimulating debate. A numbed and somnolent readership is hardly likely to respond.

A concerted effort will now be made to enhance the research content of the journal. We have been and will continue to be flexible (within reasonable limits) in the sizes of articles accepted under the Research Communication and Research Article sections. Limited reports of research findings that appear in the Scientific Correspondence section must strictly conform to prescribed size limits. In attempting to enhance the range of subjects represented in the journal, we invite authors in disciplines poorly represented on our pages – physics, chemistry, molecular biology and engineering sciences – to submit some of their best work for consideration. The two sections of the journal with the highest rejection rate for unsolicited manuscripts are Research News and Meeting Reports. Research News articles must highlight in a broadly readable manner, important new findings that appear in the scientific literature. Such manuscripts must be written in a manner that the major thrust is clear to a general audience of scientists. They should also attract specialist readers with a sufficiently scholarly overview. Meeting reports are intended to provide highlights of important workshops and symposia in different fields. They must not become a report of inaugural ceremonies, exhaustively listing the dignitaries who invariably appear on the dias on these occasions. They should also not be a mere catalogue of speakers and topics, but must focus on the science discussed.

Apart from a healthy inflow of good manuscripts, a sound financial position is, of course, an absolute necessity for any journal. Since personal subscriptions are 'subsidized' (an unpopular word, nowadays) we must turn to institutional memberships, advertisements and science funding agencies of government for support. An increased base of personal subscriptions will make the journal a more attractive advertising medium. Indian scientific journals have generally avoided vigorous pro-

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motional campaigns: partly a consequence of governmental 'umbrellas' and partly an inability to connect commercial and scientific success. *Current Science* may be gingerly taking the first steps into this uncharted territory.

At a time when most professional, specialist journals in India are faced with diminishing visibility, there is a unique opportunity to promote a truly interdisciplinary

journal. In this task, we must necessarily rely on the active support of authors, reviewers and readers, many of whom wear all three hats interchangeably. The inputs received from readers are most valuable in identifying areas for improvement.

P. Balaram

