

## To *h* or not to *h*

Even after reading the powerful and opinion-shaping editorial by Balamram<sup>1</sup>, I have the following to state. While views regarding the evaluation of science by various methods and indices may span the entire gamut from the esoteric to the mundane, I feel that some method of evaluation is essential to distinguish real science from science of sorts. This is important as research output is one of the criteria for grading universities and colleges by bodies like NAAC, and provid-

ing research grants by government agencies. It is also an index for appointments and promotions in universities and colleges. I do agree that it is not possible to have a universal method or index to judge scientific achievements. It would be interesting to see the evolution of different methodologies, encompassing every nuance, to evaluate scientific accomplishments by individuals and institutions. A thin line separates fun from frolic. Science certainly will be fun

without such strangleholds as evaluating indices and factors, but it should not become frolic.

1. Balamram, P., *Curr. Sci.*, 2009, **96**, 1289–1290.

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## Historical notes in *Current Science*

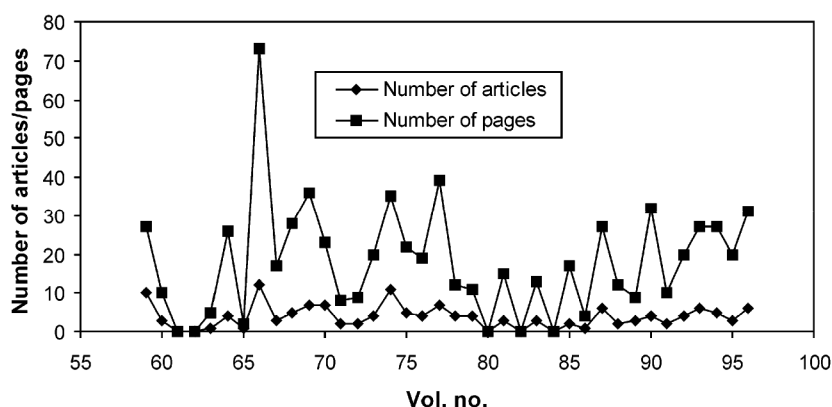
*Current Science* came into existence<sup>1</sup> in 1932. In 1989, the editorship of the journal was taken up by S. Ramaseshan (1923–2003) and P. Balamram. In 1990, the journal published articles about the history of science under the category ‘Historical Commentary and Note’ (later ‘Historical Notes’). Clearly, it took more than half a century before the subject acquired an ‘official’ status in the journal. However, it does not mean that articles on the topic were not published earlier. For instance, in 1933 Martin Forster, Director, Indian Institute of Science (1922–33), published his lecture ‘History of Science as related to Civilisation’<sup>2</sup>. He stated the contribu-

tion of different scientists and concluded: ‘If half the attention of schools, colleges and mature citizens that has been given to Alexander [the Great], [Gaius Julius] Caesar and Napoleon [Bonaparte] had been devoted to [Michael] Faraday, [Louis] Pasteur, . . . , the world would be a different and a better world today’<sup>2</sup>. Another fact, which is relevant to the history of science, is the regular publication of ‘Obituary’ and ‘Personal News’. They were included from the very beginning. For instance, one of the earliest obituaries to have appeared in *Current Science* is that of the Nobel Laureate, Ronald Ross<sup>3</sup>. Here, the development of the

‘Historical Commentary and Note’ and ‘Historical Notes’ categories is analysed. The results are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows that, *Current Science* published 10 articles on the history of science in 1990 (59). Until its recent issue (25 May 2009, 96), the subject is appearing almost regularly. During the said period 146 articles (number of pages, 686) have been published. One on average, each volume contains 3 to 8 articles (average number of pages 18). Figure 1 also shows that out of 38 volumes, only in five ‘Historical Notes’ did not appear. Since the middle of 2004, there has also been an increase in the number of pages per article.

Thus the present analysis shows that there is increasing interest about the history of science in India.



**Figure 1.** Along the x-axis the volume number of *Current Science* is shown. The y-axis presents the number of articles as well as the number of pages. The peak 66 is due to a number of articles on ‘S.N. Bose statistics’ (*Curr. Sci.*, 25 June 1994) and a ‘Historical Note’ [The 16th British Commonwealth Lecture by J. R. D. Tata] (*Curr. Sci.*, 25 March 1994).

1. Krishnan, R. and Balamram, P., *Curr. Sci.*, 2007, **92**, 129–138.
2. Forster, M., *Curr. Sci.*, 1933, **2**, 86–91.
3. Sinton, J. A., *Curr. Sci.*, 1932, **1**, 109–111.

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