

FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK



taking stock

On April 2, 1921, Science Service, then six weeks old, distributed the first "bulletins" of its newspaper service. Science reporting then was haphazard, and we were filling a gap; this was the first major activity of the organization which was formed to communicate recent developments in science to the public, a concept which at that time was as unique as it was foreseeing.

Forty-eight years later, we see much more clearly that, in a democracy, it is particularly important that the public should understand the aims and achievements of modern science, not only because of the value of such knowledge but because the ultimate success of research and its support directly or indirectly depend upon popular appreciation of its methods.

And in the intervening years, we have also come to realize that even the specialist in a field of science is often little more than a layman in every scientific discipline but his own, that he too needs some means of keeping in close contact with new ideas and discoveries in other disciplines. We see this, too, as part of our role.

At the beginning of 1969, as we reappraise our work, it seems appropriate to give you as well a brief resume of our efforts to achieve this dual aim.

Although our newspaper service is our oldest activity, and has made the Science Service name familiar to 70 million newspaper readers, we feel that it still has untapped potential; the need is still great, despite the record so far.

We are therefore pleased to announce a cooperative venture with another well-known organization, the Newspaper Enterprise Association, NEA, which will help us to reach additional newspapers throughout the United States and Canada. We expect that this will enable us to expand and improve our service, and that more readers than ever before will see the world of science through our eyes, under the Science Service byline in their newspapers.

Another longtime activity of ours is SCIENCE NEWS, and we have been investing a great deal of effort in changes which we think have improved it substantially in the last two years. We have more than doubled its reporting staff, a step which enables us to cover directly a still-expanding range of subjects. Since science is international, we have also added correspondents overseas, from Canberra to New Delhi to Geneva, and sent reporters to the Amazon and to Antarctica.

As a result, acceptance by our readers, as well as our list of subscribers, continues to grow, and this issue will be sent to something over 117,000 subscribers—scientists, engineers, doctors, interested laymen, teachers and students. If we talk of readers, as opposed to subscribers, we reach a million a week or more.

But there is a transience about news that seems to conflict with the permanence of the work we report on day by day.

In an effort to resolve that conflict, and provide from year to year a more lasting evaluation and account of progress in the fields of science and its applications, Science Service is embarking on a new venture: the "Science News Yearbook."

Based largely on the work of our staff over the year, it will take advantage of the new perspective invariably created by the passage of time. It will offer us a chance to look over our shoulders, as it were, at the road science has traveled during the year.

Here, too, we are associated with a fine name in publishing, Charles Scribner's Sons.

The first "Science News Yearbook" will appear in the spring; it will be published annually thereafter, and will be available at bookstores.

We are also conducting, with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, another experiment in the communication of the substance of science: a project which will make available audio tape recordings of outstanding sessions of the December AAAS meeting in Dallas. The titles of the recordings available will be announced in January or February. We feel that this is an important new experiment in bringing significant discussions of science and its implications to those who are unable to attend such meetings.

There are other developments in the planning stage, for Science Service must continue to grow and change. We try to remember that keeping up with rapid changes in science grows more important every year, for scientist and layman alike.

E. G. Sherburne Jr.

18 january 1969/vol. 95/science news/59