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COVER: Contained within the rather simple-looking convolutions of the brain are worlds of tiny nerve and chemical pathways that science is just beginning to comprehend. Nevertheless, researchers are discovering more in this decade about the brain and its function than perhaps had ever been learned in all prior years of study. And though some of the discoveries have already revolutionized certain areas of psychiatry and medicine, the ultimate implications of this new knowledge may still be beyond the limits of our imaginations. See special Brain Section starting on p. 360. (Photo: Courtesy of *Programs of the Brain*, by J. Z. Young, Oxford U. Press, 1978, see Books listing p. 381)

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Margaret Mead 1901-1978



Mead getting to know the Balinese on a 1957 field trip.

In a career that spanned more than half a century, Margaret Mead did more than perhaps any other single person to advance the field of cultural anthropology. For while she proved herself an innovator methodologically — helping to establish the broad-based approach to anthropology that is prevalent today—she also used her celebrity status to help advance public understanding and appreciation of her field.

Now Mead, to many the embodiment of cultural anthropology, is dead of cancer. She died in New York on November 15 at the age of 76.

Mead was educated at Columbia University, receiving her master's degree in psychology in 1924 and a doctorate in anthropology in 1929 after studying with Franz Boas. She continued her association with the school by later becoming adjunct professor of anthropology.

The majority of Mead's professional life, though — when she was not in the field — was spent at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, where she came to work as assistant curator of ethnology in 1926 and retired as curator in 1969 after holding an intermediate post as associate curator from 1942 to 1964. (She retained the title of curator emeritus until her death.)

A National Research Council-sponsored trip to Samoa in 1925 determined the course Mead's career was to take and led to her writing the book for which she is probably best known — *Coming of Age in Samoa* (celebrating the golden anniversary of its publication this year).

Her observations of Samoans and of the inhabitants of six other South Seas islands that she later visited led Mead to propose the then controversial idea that youthful disaffection in the United States was not innate but was caused by the American way of life, and to suggest that inhabitants of the United States could benefit by following the example of so-called "primitive" cultures. Mead's espousal of causes ranging from women's rights to environmentalism sprang in part from this belief

that society should change to meet the needs of people and earned her a reputation as a scholar-activist.

Mead was not hesitant about giving voice to her views and was a prolific speaker, giving lectures and speeches as varied as they were numerous. This constant public exposure made her a household name, and a poll conducted in 1972 showed that she ranked third (after Barry Commoner and Paul Erlich) in terms of visibility (SN: 6/7/75, p. 370).

In addition to traveling the lecture circuit, Mead was able to share her work and ideas in her capacity as elected head of several professional organizations. Included among her numerous appointments was a term as president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1975 (she was the second woman to hold the office) and one as the president of the American Anthropological Association in 1960.

Mead also continued to write books, producing a total of about 25. She wrote alone and in collaboration with other writers whose varied backgrounds — both scientific and nonscientific — reflect the diversity of her interests.

In discussing her life during a U.S. Information Agency-sponsored film, Mead said: "... I am glad I've been alive long enough to see so many changes and to look forward to so many changes." This dedication to change and improvement led her in 1976 to help establish New Directions, a citizens lobby dedicated to helping alleviate social ills globally. Mead's interest in changing inequities was balanced by her desire to preserve that which was of value, and she was instrumental in helping to create the Smithsonian Institution's National Anthropological Film Center.

In summing up the effect of Mead's death, Edward J. Lehman, executive director of the American Anthropological Association, termed it "a loss not only to anthropology, but to science in general; not only to U.S. society, but to the world." □