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Cover: Photographed from a U-2 aircraft, volcanic Mt. St. Helens steams away beneath a cloud cover. Ash fall covers its eastern flanks. Story p. 277. (Photo courtesy of NASA)

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From the Editor

READER: KNOW THYSELF

Know your audience — that's a necessity for anyone who hopes to communicate effectively.

We at SCIENCE NEWS think we know our audience, but we use readership surveys to make sure that the audience we think is out there really is out there. Our most recent survey finds, essentially, what our previous survey found (SN: 12/27/75, p. 396) and confirms many of our instinctive feelings about who our audience is. The average SN reader is 40 years old, well-educated, works in industry (32 percent), at a university or college (19 percent) or for the government (16 percent) doing research and development (37 percent) or teaching (30 percent) and earns about \$30,000 per year.

McGraw-Hill Research conducted this year's survey for SN. On Feb. 12 questionnaires were mailed to 1,000 subscribers chosen on an nth name basis from the SN subscription list. By March 12, the cutoff date, 496 questionnaires had been returned (one of which was unusable). Based on these returns, the survey tells us that:

- 75 percent of SN readers are men (83 percent of the respondents in 1975 were men).
- 59 percent are between 25 and 49 years of age.
- 70 percent hold a bachelors degree or higher — masters (19 percent), doctorate (16 percent), medical (5 percent), law (1 percent).
- Energy, electronics, environment, health, aerospace and communications (in that order) are the fields in which most SN readers have a professional interest.
- The majority (87 percent) read SN at home, and most (75 percent) do so within two days of receipt.
- 67 percent of the respondents employed by a college or university write articles for publication.
- Large proportions of the respondents in education (59 percent), administration (51 percent) and research and development (49 percent) are active in professional associations.
- 16 percent of the respondents own personal computers; half of these computer owners intend to add modules (memory, floppy disc, printer) to their computers within the next 12 months; and 30 percent of SN readers report that they intend to purchase a personal computer within three years.

These figures tell us a lot about the quality of our readers and about the high degree of involvement they have with SN. We find this gratifying, but there is another figure we are proud of — one that tells us something about the quantity of our readership. Two-thirds of the survey respondents report that they pass along their copies of SN to other readers. So, on the average, each issue of SN is read by 2.92 persons. With our new all-time high in circulation (182,226, or 10,000 more subscribers than at this time last year) this means that SN reaches more than 500,000 persons each week. We take this as an encouraging indication that we do know our audience and that we are communicating effectively.

Many thanks to those who took time to participate in the survey.

Robert J. Trotter

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