

SIXTY YEARS OF SCIENCE NEWS

With all the talk today of the sudden "explosion" of public interest in science, one might think that until recently the average person had little or no access to news of scientific developments. SCIENCE NEWS readers know better. They have, in fact, since March 13, 1922—exactly 60 years prior to the publication date of this week's special issue commemorating our anniversary.

For six decades, SCIENCE NEWS—begun as SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER—has reported on all major (and a few offbeat) aspects of science on a weekly basis. Today it remains the only weekly newsmagazine of science published in the United States; its international circulation of nearly 200,000 encompasses about 100 foreign countries, including a translated version of the magazine in the People's Republic of China.

Ironically, this week we are sacrificing one of our strongest virtues: timeliness in covering breaking news stories. But we think it is an appropriate time to step back and view with perspective the evolution—in some cases, the birth—of significant areas of science in the last 60 years or more.

To say that science journalism over that period has been revolutionized is no exaggeration. And to say that Science Service, the nonprofit corporation that founded and publishes SCIENCE NEWS, has been the prime pioneer in this revolution is no overstatement. "Without minimizing the continuing operational activities of Science Service," its director, the late Watson Davis, said in 1960, "its major contribution might be considered to be that it has made science acceptable to the American press and that it has made science reporting acceptable and respectable in both newspaper and science circles." It was a young Watson Davis who teamed with journalist/chemist Edwin E. Slosson on April 2, 1921 to edit the first incarnation of the publication, SCIENCE NEWS BULLETIN, which functioned essentially as a source of information for established news syndicates.

But in response to public demand, the bulletin quickly grew into a primary source of science news, available to individuals through subscription: On March 13, 1922, SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER was born. In addition to reports of science news of the week, the newsletter initiated a books column, which is still part of the magazine. That first issue detailed the arrival and "the future of America's youngest, fastest growing and most astonishing development"—radio broadcasting. Experts at a Department of Commerce conference, SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER reported, "look forward to the day when one person will be able to simultaneously address by radio the majority of people in this country."

While it is fun to look back at such early reports, their importance as some of the first attempts at serious science reporting should not be lost. "It wasn't too many decades ago," former SCIENCE NEWS Editor Kendrick Frazier wrote in 1970, "that most science reporting in the press consisted of cute features about the slightly oddball scientist tinkering in his basement laboratory and of Sunday-supplement imaginative excursions into entertaining pseudoscience. . . . Science Service's efforts in the beginning of the 1920s helped create the relationship of mutual respect, if not always unquestioned trust, that exists today between science and the press and helped establish the tradition for solid coverage of science."

It is gratifying to see evidence of such respect expressed for SCIENCE NEWS by scientists and fellow journalists (see pages 176 and 177). Most gratifying, though, is the knowledge that we continue to adhere to the original goal of Science Service founders William E. Ritter and E. W. Scripps to report news-

worthy and timely developments to the public—and to more of the public than ever before.


SCIENCE NEWS is committed to reporting not only with accuracy and thoroughness but with insight—and, where appropriate, humor—that readers are unlikely to find elsewhere. This has always been the case, but perhaps has become most apparent since March 12, 1966, when the publication officially became SCIENCE NEWS magazine. Today, our award-winning staff includes some of the country's most talented science writers.

Like science journalism, science itself is a perpetual exercise in self-refinement and improvement: striving to explain the "whys" and "hows" of things, rather than simply the "whos," "whats" and "wheres." It is impossible to cover in the 32 pages of this issue more than half a century of science. What we have tried to do is convey a sense of the scientific process; how far we've come and how far we have to go; how different things are, yet, in many cases, not so different from the visions of scientists and others in 1922.

And it is an expression of thanks to you, our readers, for years—for some, decades—of support for SCIENCE NEWS.



Joel Greenberg
Editor



SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER

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BROADCASTS
Radio News of the Week

WIDE-SPREAD BROADCASTING
ASSURED BY RADIO CONFERENCE

Washington, The allocation of radio wave lengths and recommendations made in the tentative report of the Conference on Radio Telephony called by the Department of Commerce have assured the widespread use of radio for the broadcasting of public information and other matters of general interest.

The experts who have been deciding on the future of America's youngest, fastest growing and most astonishing development recommend, in brief, the following action:

Amend present radio laws to give the Secretary of Commerce effective and practically complete control of all transmitting stations. Receiving stations are not to be regulated except where they produce radiations that interfere with other stations. Radio communication is a public utility and as such should be regulated and controlled by the Federal Government in the public interest.

The conference has laid out an ambitious program of research to be undertaken by the Bureau of Standards of the Department of Commerce with a view to reducing interference between stations. It declared that "the types of apparatus most effective in reducing interference should be made freely available to the public without restriction".

The findings of the conference look forward to the day when one person will be able to simultaneously address by radio the majority of people in this country. Under the tentative recommendations official federal government broadcasting has

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