

Letters

Airport noise and investigator bias

The research linking airport noise to cardiovascular disease and suicide ("Airport noise linked with heart disease," SN: 5/7/83, p. 294) illustrates how pervasive investigator bias is in modern scientific research. The experimental data showed that those who live within the landing approach zone adjacent to the Los Angeles International Airport have a statistically high mortality rate from heart disease and violence. Nothing in these data points conclusively to noise, per se, as a cause of this elevated mortality rate. Other factors, such as the stress induced by constant fear of airplanes crashing into one's house (the constant sight of airplanes approaching low overhead would almost certainly add to this fear) also account just as credibly for the mortality data. Additionally, air pollutants from jet aircraft operating at reduced throttle in close proximity could also contribute to cardiovascular disease in the statistical area. The only conclusion that can be drawn from these data is that it is statistically dangerous to live in the landing approach pattern of L.A. International Airport. The researcher's conclusions may be correct, and in fact seem quite plausible, yet they have not in any sense been proven by the data in question.

J. R. Casey Bralla
Asheboro, N.C.

Setting new standards

Some information contained in "Halting Untimely Book Ends" (SN: 3/5/83, p. 154) could cause people to store their books in unsuitable conditions. The chart in that article indicated that book life increases as the relative humidity of the storage area decreases from 50 percent to 30 percent or 10 percent. This information apparently stems from research which shows that humidity in cellulose speeds up its chemical reactions and deterioration. One must consider, however, that when a book is used the pages are flexed. Storage of books in a low R.H. environment can desiccate the paper and lower its folding endurance. Environmental standards for book storage have been set at 70°F (or lower, where practical) and 45 to 55 percent R.H. These standards take into consideration the effects of temperature and relative humidity on both the usability and the longevity of books.

Catherine Atwood
Bonnie Jo Cullison
Conservation Department
The Newberry Library
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A Corps correction

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of Allan Chen's article "Dammed if They Do and Dammed if They Don't" (SN: 3/26/83, p. 204). The article is an excellent comprehensive and objective discussion of a very complex topic.

I would like to correct a statement attributed to me appearing on page 205. The statement is as follows: "The purpose of the auxiliary control structure is to strengthen the low sill structure. By operating it some of the time, says Kaufman, the structure 'reduces the tendency for scour [the erosive action of the river] to erode the channel.'" Actually we plan to operate the auxiliary structure essentially all of the time. It is important that the auxiliary structure be operated in this manner rather than some of the time to ensure that it serves its intended function.

Robert I. Kaufman, P.E.
Corps of Engineers
Vicksburg, Miss.



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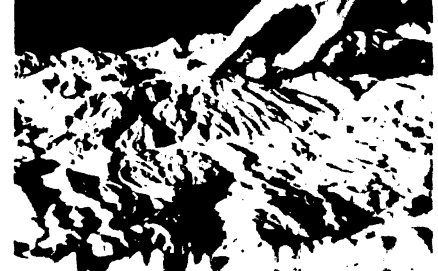
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