

Bibiofilm Service now operating in four Washington libraries puts at the disposal of every one doing serious research the resources of the most complete collections of scientific literature in the United States. From the standpoint of original literature microfilms places those doing research in the most isolated institutions on an equality with those working in immediate proximity to complete collections of scientific periodicals. It may be expected therefore that many who have hitherto been prevented from undertaking research for want of proper library facilities, will now find it possible to devote themselves to the numberless scientific and technical problems awaiting solution.

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IMPROVEMENT OF SCIENCE INSTRUCTION

THE American Association for the Advancement of Science Committee on the Improvement of Science in General Education¹ held a meeting at Chicago on December 3 and 4, on one aspect of which a preliminary report has already been made.² Some of its findings may be of interest to readers of SCIENCE.

Of 2,565 inquiries sent out last May, seeking information on what college and university teachers of science were thinking and doing about adapting their offerings to the requirements of *general education*, in distinction from *specialist education*, more than 1,200 replies had been received. Eleven hundred of these had been analyzed to date, yielding, among other things, the following information.

Of those replying, 64 per cent. were doubtful or more than doubtful about the value of the conventional introductory college courses in the various sciences to non-majors. 70 per cent., however, feared that attempts so to modify first-year courses as to make them of greater value to non-majors might be attended by the danger of making the courses superficial.

There seemed, nevertheless, to be little disposition to maintain the *status quo*, for 86 per cent. had made changes in their introductory courses within the last five years, of sufficient extent to justify report.

Insufficient motivation for a study of teaching problems seemed to be regarded as a handicap, for 62 per cent. felt that the disproportionate emphasis placed on publication of results of "pure research" as a basis for professional recognition and advancement had retarded the development of a real concern about and research upon teaching problems in the introductory courses in the sciences.

77 per cent. expressed the need for a discussion and clarification of the issue of the place of science in general education at the college and university level.

¹ SCIENCE, 87: 454, 1938.

² SCIENCE, 88: 588, 1938.

The fact that only a little over one third of a mature group of college teachers of the sciences possesses unqualified confidence in the value of the traditional first-year courses to non-majors raises several questions. What do they think is wrong with these courses? Along what lines would they undertake improvement? What has brought about their impression of the inadequacy of the first-year science courses to the purposes of general education? These are not easy questions to answer, but the committee is deeply concerned with ways and means of trying to answer them.

Questionnaires are notoriously "slippery" ways of acquiring information, and it was only after some hesitation that a questionnaire was utilized as a first probe, primarily because it was the quickest way of getting started. Other channels of information are being opened up. Special visits have been made by representatives of the committee to 115 science departments where significant experimentation on teaching methods seemed to be under way. An extended bibliography of publications on the relation of the sciences to general education, indexed and annotated, will be prepared for the use of the committee. In addition, as indicated in previous communications, the committee solicits correspondence with any who have teaching experiments under way or who are contemplating such.

Perhaps it should be emphasized that this committee's primary responsibility is to chart the field; only secondarily, if at all, to try directly to solve the problems therein. Some of the problems which loom are, in fact, beyond the ability of any one group to cope with. Hence the wisdom of the founding committee of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which provided, among other things, that this committee should clarify and define the problems involved in teaching the sciences as a part of the program of general education; serve as a clearing house for coordinating the activities of the several agencies now at work on parts of the whole problem as well as new agencies which may be initiated for the improvement of science teaching; act in an advisory capacity on any studies approved by it and supported through it; require and coordinate reports of such studies and provide for publication of the findings.

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THE BENLD METEORITE, ILLINOIS NO. 2

ON September 29, 1938, between the hours of 9:00 and 9:10 A.M. occurred the second meteorite fall ever to be recorded within the state of Illinois. This important event took place in the south edge of the town of Benld, Macoupin County, near the southeast corner of the S W $\frac{1}{4}$; S W $\frac{1}{4}$; Section 31, Township 8 North; Range 6 West of the 3rd P.M. ($89^{\circ} 48' 52'' \pm$ W. Long.; $39^{\circ} 05' 14'' \pm$ North Lat.)