Letters

Legibility

The current intensified effort to make foreign technical literature more accessible raises questions about the legibility of the translations scientists are expected to review and ways in which such deficiencies as occur in this respect can be corrected. Scientists must do enough reading as it is without the additional burden of having to read material that seems better designed to increase eyestrain than to impart information.

The copies of translations which have come to our attention leave much to be desired. Many of the original translations were poorly typed—letters were faded or smudged, and so on. Some reproductions have been negatives—that is, white type on black background—making for very difficult reading. In a number of cases reductions in size of type and in spacing between words and lines have compounded the illegibilities and compacted the text beyond acceptable minimum standards.

Such conditions undoubtedly contribute to eyestrain, and thus to an increased drain on our energies—and perhaps even to a build-up of psychological resistance to the reading matter as a whole.

Since requirements for effective scientific work undoubtedly encompass the well-being of the scientists themselves, we suggest that information on standards be summarized and disseminated for the express purpose of promoting necessary improvements in the materials we have to read. (We recognize, of course, that other conditions may contribute to eyestrain, such as poor lighting or improperly designed fixtures or furniture. Here, too, ample information is available on desirable standards.) To that end we propose the appointment of an AAAS committee to (i) collect and report on technically established legibility standards for reading matter; (ii) determine the extent to which such standards are being met by translation services (public or private), and (iii) work with such services toward meeting standards where they are not now being met. The following illustrates how standards can be formulated. Maximum acceptable number of lines per (vertical) inch may be taken as 10. Maximum number of characters (letters, punctuation marks, and so on, and word spaces) per line may be 60, with 25 to 50 an ideal range. Incidentally, the American Council of Learned Societies reported on a study on this general subject in a 207-page "Manual on Methods of Reproducing Research Materials," by Robert C. Binkley and others (Edwards, Ann Arbor, Mich.), in 1936.

One objection that may be raised to higher standards (one physicist of our acquaintance did raise it) is that the cost of reproducing translations might be materially increased. Probably so, at least in the beginning. However, the benefits to the individuals and their work should be well worth the higher costs, if any. And in any event, technical ingenuity can surely be counted upon to bring down costs if the incentives to do so become strong enough.

We hope this letter will arouse discussion leading to positive action.

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Blood-Group Nomenclature

The undersigned object to the report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* for 31 August 1957 on "Medicolegal applications of blood grouping tests." In our judgment this report is a highly biased document, and certain of us have already expressed contrary opinions during the course of the report's formulation, without much effect. The Subcommittee on Medicolegal Problems responsible for this report consisted of four members all of whom are from the United States and two of whom were the chief protagonists for one of the nomenclatures under dispute. Therefore we, the undersigned, do not intend to abide by the recommendations of the report, and we shall continue to use the C-D-E nomenclature until such time as a properly representative international body arrives at a definite nomenclature.

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The report of the Subcommittee on Medicolegal Problems, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association,* contains a recommendation on Rh nomenclature that can hardly be conceived as a restriction on the liberty of the signers of the protest, or of anyone else active in the field, to use whatever terminology they choose. The desirabil-