With commendable discretion the authors recognize that only time and use will tell how helpful their interviews with scientists will be for historians; but, in fact, neither the authors nor others now working in this area question the general value of such oral histories. As for the manuscript materials (of which over 10,000 items are listed), professional historians of science with interest in the history of the physical sciences from about 1875 to 1935 will recognize the value of having this extraordinary source guide within arm's length.

ERWIN HIEBERT
Department of History of Science, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Ph.D.'s: Pesky Foreign Languages

Feininger's opinions (Letters, 2 June) concerning the value of Ph.D. foreign language requirements lead me to express some observations of my own, gathered from years of teaching language reading courses to Ph.D. candidates. The old arguments for studying foreign languages (notably German and French for "scientific" reasons) are no longer viable. English is strongly entrenched as the medium through which contemporary scientific research is made known internationally. The English-speaking scientist is under no special constraint to write in any other language, while his non-English-speaking colleague may feel a very strong compulsion to use English if he wishes to advertise his work beyond the boundaries of his own country or language community. This state of affairs underlies the sentiment that the foreign language requirement is "something extra" in our Ph.D. curricula. Little progress has been made toward changing the archaic and sometimes informal method of testing via written translation of selections chosen for their special difficulty. I have yet to find proof that the skill to translate is a proper measure of fluency and I suspect that few Ph.D. candidates in the so-called "hard" sciences are willing to use the foreign language actively once they have passed that pesky translation exam. The candidate in the non-English speaking country, by contrast, remains ever aware of the lasting importance of English to his career.

While I approve Feininger's plea for better style and expression in the scientist's native language, I am not ready to sacrifice foreign languages. Why should our scientists be deprived of the intellectual pursuit of learning another man's way of expression and his different cultural values? For one who must always be concerned with logical processes, what justification is there for disallowing the stimulating mental activity of having to reformulate and validate his thinking in another language? Many a physicist or chemist participating in an international convention or doing foreign research has felt the need to converse in any number of languages. Learning to speak or write a foreign language admittedly takes valuable time. Therefore let us make certain that our fledgling scientists get their language training early in the undergraduate years and let us give them greater latitude in selecting the language they wish to study.

ROBERT J. DI PIETRO
Georgetown University Institute of Languages and Linguistics, Washington, D.C. 20007

As a technical editor I am aware that many a keen scientific mind has not been trained to put together a concise and logically organized paragraph or even a grammatically correct sentence. It's a pity that our age of specialization should permit—even condone—such ill-balanced development. I would not, however, want English composition to be stressed at the expense of a foreign language requirement. Having observed members of the European scientific community speaking (not only reading) three or four different languages, I have become vividly aware of the language shortcomings of our U.S. education. I should like to see the pendulum swing toward true command of both English and some other language.

CHARLOTTE E. MAUK
Lawrence Radiation Laboratory, Berkeley, California 94720

Measles Vaccines: Assured Safety

In Albrecht's letter (26 May) "Can measles be eradicated?" he states that "to the best of my knowledge" the duration of the controlled field trials of live attenuated measles virus vaccines have been for only one month's duration. Obviously, he is not familiar with the large amount of data on controlled studies now available (*1–6*). The controlled field trials of the new live