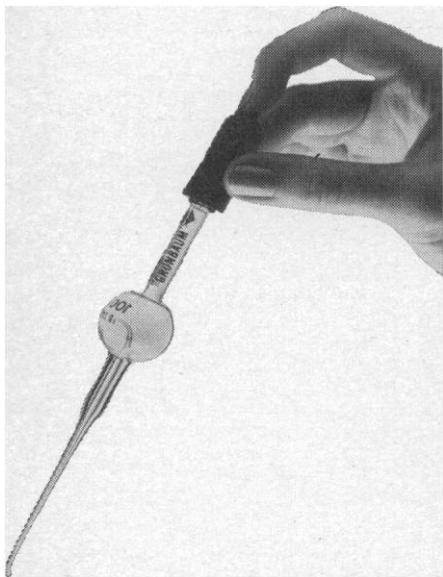


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with no readily perceived connection. In addition, two important references on the subject of interest which I had obtained by the old, more time-consuming (?) method were not listed by the computer.

This listing was obtained in response to a fairly specific request. Imagine the response to a generalized statement of interest covering a wide range of subjects!

EDWARD S. ROGERS
8888 Wolf Road, Hinsdale, Ill. 60521

Survey Synonym

In reporting the results of a survey, Reagan (Letters, 5 April) suggests that scientists live with a "bifurcated tension situation." It sounds like a frightful thing to have around the house. Would it perhaps be less threatening if it were called a "dilemma"?

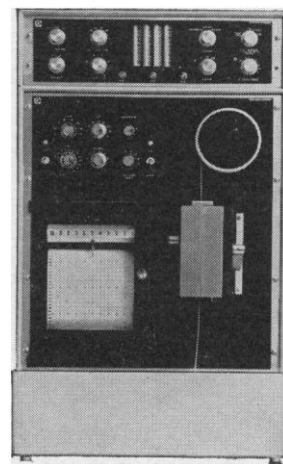
ARTHUR KOHLENBERG
40 Appleton Street,
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

Importance of Being Important

In his article "When is research the answer?" (8 Mar., p. 1079), Pierce does not acknowledge that much of the great science of the past would have failed initially to meet any reasonable criterion of "importance," social or otherwise. Given the philosophical and practical concerns of the respective times, how "important" did it seem to wonder, for example, about the swing of the pendulum, the effect of current flow on magnetic needles, the properties of partial vacuums, and the fauna of the Galapagos? Not very important, it would seem from the historical record, and there is no evidence that we today are any smarter about guessing where the most powerful secrets of nature are hidden than were the contemporaries of Galileo, Faraday, Boyle, or Darwin.

However hard it may be, it seems essential that the scientific community try to distinguish between applied and basic research or between technology and science. The case put by Pierce is fundamental when research is being conducted for the sake of an "organization," but only then. The customer (individual or institutional) has a right to demand fair value for its investment. And if the commodity is useful knowl-

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