OOS to Address Research Problems in Science and Technology for Physically Handicapped Individuals

Handicapped scientists and engineers will work with the AAAS Office of Opportunities in Science (OOS) to draw up a research agenda for science and technology for the physically disabled. This unique approach, actively involving handicapped scientists in every phase of the work, will give the resulting agenda a validity previous studies have lacked.

Funding for the project comes from the Office of Problem Analysis of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Applied Science and Research Applications Directorate (ASRA).

The National Science Foundation is already supporting a significant number of research projects dealing with science and technology for disabled persons, making it a logical base from which to explore the many lines of research and development that have potential for benefiting the handicapped. This kind of research requires a multidisciplinary approach which includes not only the natural sciences and engineering, but also the social, behavioral, and medical sciences. It also requires the early and meaningful input of handicapped scientists and consumers—which the AAAS is in a unique position to organize for NSF.

Although extensive research in science and technology for handicapped individuals has been carried out by NSF and other federal agencies in the past, successful research results too often have lacked the attention and follow-up needed to carry them through the feasibility and implementation processes. Because of this, NSF's ASRA Directorate has been directed by the Congress to establish a science and technology program focused on the problems of the disabled and to do so in a cooperative mode with other federal agencies dedicated to serving handicapped individuals and their families. The AAAS project will help to develop the agenda to fulfill this mandate.

One of the continuing problems in R & D for the handicapped is that the consumers, that is, the physically disabled themselves, have not been adequately involved in the problem analysis, research design, and evaluation. The results are often inappropriate—sometimes bizarre—technologies. When research has been done on the needs of the handicapped, it has too often been done on populations in hospitals rather than on the independent handicapped persons who are living and working in the community. To avoid the development of inappropriate or unmarketable devices and the possible mismatch of problems and solutions, it is necessary to involve able, independent handicapped people with the researchers in defining their needs and shaping research and development priorities. The Office of Opportunities in Science has done this with highly satisfying results in all its research and other programs with handicapped scientists and will again integrate the professional expertise of handicapped scientists and engineers in the formation of a proposed R & D agenda in science and technology for the handicapped.

This project began in September and will be completed in December. It is expected to assist NSF in meeting the legislative requirements for planning a program of sponsored research and development of technological aids for handicapped persons, and in providing the scientific knowledge that facilitates the development, evaluation, marketing, and use of such aids. A group of eight to ten persons—some experienced in research planning and familiar with the issues of science and technology for the handicapped (including two social scientists) and some handicapped scientists and/or engineers familiar with R & D developments and needs of the handicapped—will be chosen to advise the project.

In addition, later this fall the Association will organize a two and one-half day workshop of handicapped scientists and engineers, researchers interested in science and technology for the handicapped, and representatives of handicapped consumer organizations to respond to questions and issues regarding proposed lines of research and to make recommendations and suggest priorities for a research agenda. Following the workshop, AAAS/OOS staff and project advisers will produce a report which (i) provides supplementary documentation and examples of the scope and implications of the issues raised at the workshop; (ii) outlines promising lines of research; and (iii) identifies priorities and sequences where appropriate.

The principal investigators for the project, Dr. Janet Welsh Brown, program head, OOS, and Dr. Martha Ross Redden, director, Project on the Handicapped in Science, invite comments concerning the project, examples of technology to be considered, or other suggestions.

Interested persons may write to the Office of Opportunities in Science at the AAAS address or call 202-467-4496 (voice or TTY).

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INTERCIENCIA Marks Second Anniversary, Sets Symposia

A reception commemorating the second year of publication of *INTERCIENCIA* was held in Caracas on 17 May. Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez, cabinet ministers, and several hundred members of the scientific, educational, and diplomatic communities honored *INTERCIENCIA* editor Marcel Roche and Salvatore Pluchino, secretary-treasurer of the Interciencia Association.

INTERCIENCIA began its third year of publication with its first special issue, which appeared in July and was devoted to the ecosystems of the Amazon basin.

The Interciencia Association (IA) will sponsor the seventh in its symposia series in La Paz, B.C., Mexico, 7–9 November 1978. The symposium, "Plant Resources for the Development of Arid Lands," is cosponsored by the National Council of Science and Technology of Mexico (CONACYT) and the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC). The 3-day symposium