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New Magazine: Opportunity for the Membership

The Board of directors of the AAAS, meeting in Washington on 20 and 21 April, unanimously made the important decision that the Association should publish a new magazine, to be called *Science 80*, *Science 81*, *Science 82*, and so on. It is in no sense a substitute for the present *Science* magazine, which will continue as before to serve the membership and to present AAAS to the world. The object of the new magazine is to bring the findings, the methods, the spirit, and the ethic of science to a larger audience of perhaps a half-million to a million people. It will be colorful, and written to a considerable extent by professional science writers. It will be less technical than *Scientific American*, more rigorous than *Smithsonian*, and more theoretical than *Popular Mechanics*. A careful study of the market has suggested that there is a niche for such a magazine.

If that were all, however, why should AAAS do it? Why not leave it to one of the commercial publishers who have also shown interest in this niche? There are two major answers to this question. One is that AAAS from its very beginning has regarded the education of the general public in matters scientific to be one of its major functions. The second is that the new magazine provides an opportunity for the membership of the Association to participate in this educational enterprise in a variety of ways. Much of the strength of AAAS is that it symbolizes the existence of a scientific community, interested in the pursuit of evidence about a real world and inspired by curiosity and a love of veracity. Scientists are also human beings and share the faults of the species, but we should never forget that they are a subspecies of human beings with a peculiar culture of their own. If the new magazine does not reflect this culture, it will fail in its purpose of presenting science, which is a product of the scientific community, to the public at large.

Since the new magazine must fill felt public needs, the editors will set up mechanisms for identifying urgent public wishes for authentic information. However, at the same time, members should regard this new magazine not merely as a consumer good, but as an opportunity to express their own concerns and interests in the presentation of science to a larger public. I suggest that each of the AAAS sections appoint one or two correspondents to read the magazine carefully and send brief reports to the Association with criticisms and suggestions for further articles, to be transmitted to the editor and the editorial board. Members should write letters to the editor and should submit suggestions for articles themselves.

In the start-up phases of the new magazine, virtually all the content will be prepared by professional science news writers. Too few practicing scientists are good science writers at a popular level. After the style and level of the magazine are fully established, members of the Association should try to practice the art of science writing for the general public. There is no guarantee, of course, that unsolicited articles would be accepted, but this is true also of *Science* or any other reputable journal. Nevertheless, such articles would be welcomed with a clear understanding about the audience to which they are addressed.

Once the magazine is established, one would like to link it with an extensive research project in how the images of science in the minds of the general public change in regard to content and credibility. The scientific community may be facing a deepening crisis of credibility. We have pretended to know more than we do. Science is a treasure chest, but every treasure chest is also a Pandora's box and we cannot escape responsibility as a scientific community for the evil consequences as well as the good arising from increased knowledge. A new magazine should give us an opportunity to work out some of these problems and to break down some of the walls, both of language and of pride, that separate scientists from our fellow human beings.—KENNETH E. BOULDING