New Project Explores Disability Research

Recent developments in medicine and technology are improving the quality of life and broadening career options for disabled individuals. Newly designed wheelchairs are more maneuverable; infrared systems help hearing-impaired persons participate in group discussions; voice synthesizers make the computer more accessible to blind individuals; and microprocessor technology is allowing voice-disabled people to speak.

But while advances in science and engineering can have tremendous impacts on disabled people, too often technologies are developed with no input from the disabled.

The AAAS' Project on the Handicapped in Science is beginning a new program, funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), to bridge the gap between the researchers and developers of technologies and the disabled people who are potential users of the technologies.

When disabled people are not adequately involved in the analysis, design, and evaluation of technologies, the results are often unworkable. For instance, a voice-activated wheelchair was designed to respond to user commands, but when used in the outside world the device responded to environmental and other noises as well as to the user's voice, making it unsafe. When researchers do include handicapped people in the development process, too often they rely on the hospitalized population rather than on independent disabled persons living and working in the community.

In order to create a more useful system of information exchange, during the next 2 years the AAAS Project on the Handicapped in Science will be working closely with the 286 scientific and engineering societies and academies of science that are affiliated with the Association. The Project also will draw heavily on the expertise provided by more than 1000 disabled scientists and engineers who are members of the AAAS Resource Group. In addition, the AAAS project will disseminate information about emerging research to scientists and engineers in a broad range of disciplinary fields to encourage collaboration and reduce duplication of effort.

As a first step, the project will review complete and ongoing research and development of science and technology to aid handicapped persons. This will include identifying research projects funded by the NSF and other federal agencies, searching scientific literature to locate other disability related R & D projects, and organizing information from disabled user groups and individuals.

Informing the scientific and engineering community about disability-related research and involving the community in that research is the major component of the project. To encourage awareness of research opportunities in the field and more cross-disciplinary research, the project will form a consortium of associations to address science and technology to aid the handicapped. Included in the consortium will be those groups already formed by area of interest, such as biomedical engineers and computer scientists. Consortium members will share information and successful strategies that they have developed to assist the disabled. In addition, consortium members will identify national, state, and regional scientific and engineering meetings at which groups and individuals can present papers on disability research. Scientists and engineers working in the area of disability research will be encouraged to report their findings at the regular meetings of their scientific societies as well as through scientific and technical journals. Throughout the course of the project, staff will work to increase the public's awareness of research to aid the disabled as well.

By more widely involving the scientific and engineering community in disability research, including disabled individuals in the R & D process, and increasing the public's awareness of these issues, the Project on the Handicapped in Science hopes to energize the field of disability research and expand the benefits it offers to disabled individuals. The project will be directed by Martha Ross Redden and Virginia Stern of the AAAS Project on the Handicapped in Science.

Scientists and engineers whose research might have application to the project, and other interested persons should write or call Redden or Stern at the AAAS address or telephone 202-467-4496 (voice or TTY).

1983 Election Results

The successful candidates in the 1983 elections are listed below. Terms begin 30 May 1984.

President-Elect: Gerard Piel

Members of the Board of Directors: John Brooks Slaughter and Linda S. Wilson

Members of the Committee on Nominations: Eloise E. Clark, Jessica Tuchman Mathews, Robert W. Parry, and Mildred T. Stahlman

Section A–Mathematics

Chairperson-Elect: Daniel Zelinsky

Member-at-Large of the Section Committee: Anneli Lax

Members of the Electorate Nominating Committee: Martin Davis and Gene H. Golub

Section B–Physics

Chairperson-Elect: Ralph O. Simmons

Member-at-Large of the Section Committee: Ernest M. Henley

Members of the Electorate Nominating Committee: Margaret Galland Kivelson and Andrew M. Sessler

Section C–Chemistry

Chairperson-Elect: Rustum Roy

Member-at-Large of the Section Committee: Herman S. Bloch

Members of the Electorate Nominating Committee: Norman A. LeBel and David Allen Shirley

Section D–Astronomy

Chairperson-Elect: David Morrison

Member-at-Large of the Section Committee: George Field

Members of the Electorate Nominating Committee: Art Hoag and Nancy Houk

Section E–Geology and Geography

Chairperson-Elect: William W. Matthews III

Member-at-Large of the Section Committee: Melinda S. Meade

Members of the Electorate Nominat-