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# A New Feature in *Science*

Modern scientists are accused of being specialists. This is a bum rap; it is also true. It is a bum rap when it implies that Newton knew all of science in his day whereas modern scientists are merely nuclear physicists, steroid chemists, or oil economists. The truth is that each of these specialties alone encompasses far more knowledge than did all of science in Newton's day. The range of facts, theories, and technologies that modern scientists must know is usually very broad, even within what outsiders might consider a specialty. Individual scientists may appear to be narrow because of the ever increasing accumulation of knowledge. Actually they know more, but it is a smaller fraction of total knowledge.

Scientists become increasingly isolated because of the jargon used in each specialty. New terms are introduced to describe concepts unknown in Newton's day. The replicons, cistrans, and liposomes of the biologist are foreign phrases to the physicist. The quarks, bosons, and GUT of the physicists are an undeciphered code to the economist. Yet there is both a desire and a need for different disciplines to understand each other. One institution that can contribute to a translating service is a multidisciplinary journal like *Science*. The question is how. We already publish important findings from many disciplines in the same journal. But just as we see that a giraffe tends to fall in love with another giraffe, we suspect that chemists love to read chemistry, archeologists archeology, and so forth. Moreover, adventurous readers who venture outside their areas of expertise soon run into the language barrier. The arcane terminology of a different field is denounced, whereas the jargon in one's own field is defended as the only way to express complicated concepts succinctly.

We have therefore decided to contribute to interdisciplinary communication by starting a new feature, "This Week in *Science*." On this new page, Ruth Guyer will summarize four to eight papers that appear in the current issue of the magazine. The purpose of these brief summaries is to allow the mathematician to understand the purpose and basic content of an article in medicine or a sociologist to understand an article in solid-state physics. We are deliberately picking papers to illustrate diverse developments, not to confer honors on a select few. Any scientist knows that what is immediately trendy may turn out in the light of history to be less important than some unheralded work that was far ahead of its time. In addition, a magazine like *Science* operates in loco parentis—all its authors are valued and cherished. Any article or report that survives our reviewing process is deemed to be of widespread interest. However, it would be physically impossible to give a special accounting of every paper in our weekly issue. We will select only a few so that the page can be read quickly. Over the long run, the subjects will cover a wide spectrum of disciplines even though the selections from one issue will be limited. Thus, over time, the reader of this page should get a good sense of the trends and accomplishments in other fields. This service complements the role played by our Research News and News and Comment writers in reporting the developments in various fields of research. The difference is that the new summaries will be briefer and even less specialist-oriented. An advantage is that those whose curiosity for more is aroused can read the original paper in the same magazine.

Wisdom is sometimes characterized as the ability to learn a little bit about a lot of subjects and a lot about one. We hope that the Renaissance women and men who read our journal will enjoy this new feature.

—DANIEL E. KOSHLAND, JR.