Briefing:

Psychology Today Sold

The American Psychological Association has sold its money-losing magazine, *Psychology Today*, to Owen Lipstein and T. George Harris, owners of the New York–based *American Health*. The new owners will assume a 90% share of the magazine for an undisclosed cost said to be between $5 million and $10 million.

The magazine thus reverts to the hands of its original editor, Harris, who presided over it from 1968 to 1976. It now makes for a troika of Baby Boomer–oriented magazines, joining *American Health* and *Mother Earth News* in the Lipstein-Harris stable.

Psychology Today, which has been plagued by low advertising revenues, will now be part of what Lipstein calls his "Boomer Network," giving advertisers a discount for inclusion in all three publications. Harris says portions of the magazine will be revamped to cater more directly to reader interests. It will be "hipper and more fun," according to Lipstein. ■ **C.H.**

University Labs Find a Place in the Trade Bill

When the massive trade bill emerges from a House-Senate conference committee in the next few weeks it may contain an amendment that would authorize more than $300 million in matching grant programs to help universities and colleges construct new scientific research facilities. While the program may not actually win funding in fiscal year 1989 because of the tight federal budget, university lobbyists say the passage of the provision would provide leverage for obtaining an appropriation in 1990.

Now under negotiation, the package would include a provision penned by Representative Pat Williams (D–MT), chairman of the subcommittee on postsecondary education, proposing $85 million for undergraduate buildings through a program to be administered by the Department of Education. The bulk of these funds—85%—would be reserved for small institutions.

A second competitive program totaling $250 million would be operated by the National Science Foundation. This proposal has not been approved previously by the House or Senate, but is actively being discussed by House and Senate conferees as an amendment to the Williams' provision. Drafted by Representative Robert A. Roe (D–NY), chairman of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, the amendment would allocate $200 million for new facilities at institutions with graduate-level research programs. Fifteen percent of these funds would be reserved for smaller institutions. The remaining $50 million would support construction at undergraduate research facilities.

Before the proposal becomes reality, however, it must win the backing of key members of the Senate. Senator Ernest Hollings (D–SC) has indicated that he wants more than 15% of the $200-million program set aside for smaller institutions. If this set-aside issue cannot be resolved, then only the $85-million program administered by Department of Education is likely to be enacted.

But no matter how the larger program is shaped, NSF is expected to oppose it. "We will argue against it," comments one NSF official, noting that ongoing agency research programs might have to be cut or slowed to carry out the facilities program if no new funds are forthcoming. ■ **M.C.**

Triage of Earth Science Departments in Britain

In a move that has implications for almost all university science departments in Britain, the University Grants Committee (UGC) has graded earth science departments and proposed that some be closed down. Research resources would be concentrated in a dozen top-rated departments.

Earth science is the first discipline to be reviewed by the UGC—which advises Britain's Department of Education and Science on how to divide up the money it spends on universities—as part of a strategy aimed at increasing the concentration and selectivity of teaching and research resources. Similar reviews of physics and chemistry departments are currently being carried out, and another is being planned for the biological sciences.

Under the UGC's proposed scheme, four universities (Aston, Dundee, Strathclyde, and Swansea) would have all earth science activity terminated. Earth science departments in several other universities would cease to exist but their teaching activities would be transferred to other departments in the same (or neighboring) universities.

Among the more highly rated departments, only the top 12—classified as "M" (for mainstream) by the UGC—would be permitted to run large experimental equipment, both for their own research workers and for those from other universities. Special priority would be given to earth science activities in six of these: Cambridge, Edinburgh, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, and Oxford.

A second group of "I" (for interdisciplinary) departments, with priority given to East Anglia and Lancaster, would offer their own degree courses and contribute to interdisciplinary courses run with other departments.

And a third, "J" group, will offer degree-level teaching but will have no expensive research equipment.

All the universities involved have until the end of March to comment on the proposals. ■ **D.D.**

A Plea from the Social Sciences

Basic research in the social and behavioral sciences needs to receive an increase of about $240 million a year—more than 30% over current levels—within the next few years according to a comprehensive new report from the National Research Council.

The report, 3 years in the making, is billed as successor to the "BASS" (behavioral and social sciences) report issued in 1969. It was put together by the Committee on Basic Research in the Social and Behavioral Sciences, chaired by psychologist R. Duncan Luce of Harvard University and sociologist Neil J. Smelser of the University of California at Berkeley.

The committee went through a gigantic gathering and culling process, soliciting detailed recommendations from many hundreds of scientists who suggested about a thousand topics. All this has been boiled down to a summary volume* and 30 topical working papers to be published by the Russell Sage Foundation.

The report refrains from setting any priorities, noting that large increments of funding are needed across the board for research, training, and equipment (the report notes "there is a persisting view that behavioral and social sciences research can operate as a virtually equipment-free enterprise").

Social science funding has had a rocky time of it in the Reagan Administration and the tribulations are reflected in the "increasing difficulty of recruiting and retaining talented graduate students with a commitment to research." Federal funding reached its peak of $1 billion (in constant dollars) in 1972 and fell sharply in 1983, climbing to $778 million in 1987. Whereas federal support for other scientific research rose by 36% between 1972 and 1987, behavioral and social science funding experienced a 25% drop. ■ **C.H.**

**The Behavioral and Social Sciences: Achievements and Opportunities* (National Academy Press, Washington, DC, 1988).