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LETTERS

Let Me Count the Ways

I was amused and disturbed by a phrase in Gary Taubes' article "Measure for measure in science" (News & Comment, 14 May, p. 884): "objective measures of quality." Are we to believe that quality can now be objectified? Will our proclamations now be expected to take the form, "My love is like a single flower of *Rosa grandiflora* with a peak visible light reflectance of 650 nm"? Shall we expect the quality of mercy to be not only strained, but captured in a graduated cylinder? Will the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) provide us with an assessment of whether we are disgusted by the emphasis on citation analysis, or just annoyed?

Still, I suppose this is the price of entry to the brave new world. I eagerly await the next great contribution from ISI: the subjective measure of quantity.

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Science Watch's selection (1) of M. Leid *et al.*'s paper (2) as the hottest of 1992 reveals a problem with this type of analysis. *Science Watch* did not inform its readers that Leid *et al.*'s paper was not the only, and not even the first, of a series of papers reporting on similar discoveries. One was published a month earlier in the same journal (3), three others the same week (2, 4), and three more a few months later (5).

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5. T. H. Bugge, J. Pohl, O. Lonnoy, H. G. Stunnenberg, *EMBO J.* 11, 1409 (1992); M. S. Marks *et al.*, *ibid.*, p. 1419; P. L. Hallenbeck, M. S. Marks, R. E. Lippoldt, K. Ozato, V. M. Nikodem, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.* 89, 5572 (1992).

I would like to clarify a reference to my comments by Taubes in his 14 May article "Measure for measure in science." In fact, at the CHUL Research Centre, we do not use the numbers of citations of individual re-

searchers to account for 40% of their performance; rather, we use the impact factor of the journals in which they publish. Moreover, to avoid bias toward specific research fields, we are putting in place a correction factor that takes into consideration the different levels of citations in various research disciplines. Another criterion of performance, researchers' grants, as Taubes correctly indicates, counts for 40%. High-quality publications and grants are both well-recognized criteria of performance in research.

To complete the assessment, an additional parameter, the number of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, accounts for the remaining 20%, and not students' performance, as indicated by Taubes. This last parameter endorses the academic involvement of researchers.

We are convinced that the use of these objective criteria has played a key role in the dynamic development of our institution, which now ranks among the top biomedical research centers in Canada.

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AAAS's Red Scare

Unlike Wernher von Braun, I was not a celebrity being handled with kid gloves by the military in the tumultuous 1950s (News & Comment, 23 Apr., p. 486). No one "warned" me not to join the AAAS Fellow in 1956. But my experience was consistent with von Braun's. In order to participate in a project under an anticipated contract from the Air Force, I needed "secret" clearance. The Personnel Security Questionnaire I filled out in 1956 requested much detail about every organization in which I had ever held membership. I filled it out very carefully, because, although I didn't have handlers, I did recognize the problem that I would face when it was observed that my parents, who had been naturalized citizens since 1913, were born in Russia. So I was meticulous as I listed 24 organizations (including even three alumni associations, five honorary societies, the American Automobile Association, and the Museum of Modern Art).