

SCIENCE

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EDITORIAL

Letter to Floyd Bloom, Editor-in-Chief-Elect

When I was offered the editorship of *Science*, I asked Phil Abelson, my predecessor, about the job. As you know, Phil is a man known for his understatement, so when he said, "It's the best job in the world," I was impressed. As usual, he was right and, as usual, he had understated.

It is difficult to analyze what makes the job so fascinating. Part certainly comes from the wide spectrum of the constituency—scientists from mathematics to social science, from Beijing to London, from student apprentice to institute director, from abstract academic to pragmatic production chief. Part certainly comes from the narrow focus of the constituency—intellectuals all, fragmented between authors and readers, with today's authors, tomorrow's readers, and vice versa, and a fragmentation between the specialized scientists advancing through the cutting edge and the nonspecialized scientist and highly intelligent layperson keeping up with the sweep of history.

Part is certainly the challenge of the mechanics of producing a weekly—from the editors who must choose between the best and the very best, to the art team that must bring colorful life to pages of dull numbers, to the production team that keeps prima donnas on the straight-and-narrow; from the news team that must make picoseconds sound leisurely and ice ages sound urgent, to the copy editors and proofreaders to whom perfection is beauty and misspelled words and misplaced commas are cardinal sins, to the manuscript trackers who are strong advocates of "timeliness is saintliness," to administrative staff members who discover infinite supplies of oil for squeaky wheels, to the advertising department that wants to sell more ads than we have pages. Part is the intimacy of the editor with the constituency—from the irate author who calls from Sydney to the equally irate senator who calls from Washington, D.C.

Part is the constant communication with pioneers in science—the Board of Reviewing Editors, the Editorial Board, the anonymous reviewers—who so altruistically give up time from busy schedules to lend a hand to a mutual enterprise. You have chosen, as I did, to keep your lab going—a wise move, because you remain part of the constituency, constantly reminded of what it means to have a paper rejected or a grant proposal accepted.

You will find that *Science* requires you to place one foot firmly in the world of science and timelessness, producing a penetrating, clear light that illuminates obscurity and makes clear concepts that must stand firm through the slings and arrows of the ages. It will also require you to put the other foot firmly in the world of journalism and timeliness, in which the goal is a Roman candle that flashes its brilliance across the darkened sky, revealing the newest in a fleeting moment of entertainment and awe. The combination in one slender journal makes unusual demands for insight and objectivity in the news and for timeliness and excitement in the science.

If this listing of the responsibilities seems daunting, you will be sustained by a superb staff who, far from being dismayed by the ambiguities of the frontier, are exhilarated and eager to confront the challenge. Indeed, that may be the ultimate reward—the joy of camaraderie with the dedicated fellow adventurers listed on the masthead, in the table of contents, and below the title of every manuscript, who sail forth each week through mountainous waves of information to make their way to the quiet harbor of a portable issue of the journal.

On page 1441, two of your colleagues, Richard A. Lerner and Roger Guillemin, have described your illustrious career to our readers. A career of scientific discovery and professional responsibilities will serve you well, and it pleases me that the torch is passed on to one so worthy. So enjoy your leisure between now and 1 May. Weeklies and roller coasters are designed for fun and excitement, not tranquility.

Daniel E. Koshland Jr.