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# EDITORIAL

## Tech.Sight: Techniques Without Mystique

Competitive and innovative scientific research demands knowing what techniques to use when. But knowing the advantages and pitfalls of any technology requires access to the experts who have developed, applied, and often cleverly tweaked the multiple steps of a given method. Original research in *Science* rarely includes complete technological details, let alone the rationale for the methods selected to solve a problem. *Science* recognizes the need to offer readers better ways to assess and compare methods objectively in order to determine whether a new approach warrants investing their time and financial resources and whether a technique successful in one field can help in other areas of research. With these goals in mind, *Science* in this issue launches Tech.Sight, a monthly series of in-print and online highlights that complements our original scientific content.

Tech.Sight will appear in the third issue each month and will contain several new features. TechViews will give print readers brief, critical overviews of the best and most creative technologies being used in research today. The overviews will be written by the scientists who created or modified the methods for an audience of scholars from all disciplines who are not yet experts in the methods but who may want to be. As it tours through today's most powerful options for detecting, measuring, or amplifying specific molecules, or for general problem-solving, TechViews will try to address how the technology being covered offers advances over previous methods, what it requires to be done properly, in what other unexplored areas it might be useful, and when it is likely to become obsolescent. TechSightings will examine recent technological achievements reported elsewhere in the current scientific literature. Net Tips will provide specific how-to information on setting up Internet software, configuring browsers, and getting plug-ins, in short, making the most of today's powerful scientific networking technology. Products will continue to provide brief notices of new products, instrumentation, laboratory materials, and manufacturers' literature.

Other features will join Tech.Sight soon. The Digital Mailbag will sample the online feedback from Tech.Sight readers who respond via the URLs supplied after each item. Site Finder will examine the most useful techniques-related Web sites available, including hot new databases and pointers to the home pages of labs that emphasize hands-on information.

Each of the print features of Tech.Sight will have its own extensions within Science Online. For example, in Science Online, TechViews and TechSightings will provide in-depth information on the resources needed to implement a given method, including a more extensive description of its opportunities and shortcomings, as well as where to go for training in the technique. In addition, TechWire, using custom Java-based software for routing and filtering responses, will offer online-only interactive communication with TechViews writers and staff. In Tech.Sight's online moderated discussion forums, interested readers can share their experiences (positive or negative) with a technology with other readers and even pose questions to the experts. In future months, excerpts of these discussion forums will also be noted for print readers in the Digital Mailbag.

TechViews and TechSightings will undergo substantive editorial evaluation so that readers can rely on the opinions expressed as they would our original scientific content and news items. In addition to his work on Perspectives, Senior Editor David F. Voss will be the coordinating editor for Tech.Sight. He will be joined in his efforts by two contributing editors: Richard Peters of Harvard Medical School and Robert Sikorski of the National Cancer Institute. Peters and Sikorski have been active in biomedical communication for several years and are creating the custom software for TechWire's online discussion forums and links to other information resources. The online links from Tech.Sight will be available to all registered users of Science Online.

The dictionary defines a technique as "a skillful or efficient way of doing or achieving something." In launching Tech.Sight, *Science* offers an evolving new category of scientific information, perhaps as useful to scientists' careers as the innovative research we publish. To achieve this goal, *Science* eagerly solicits feedback from our readers. We would be pleased to consider your list of techniques deserving coverage along with ours. As our contributing editors mentioned during a brainstorming session, if Tech.Sight looks the same in 6 months as it did when it began, we won't be doing our job right. Tell us your view.

Floyd E. Bloom