works to a publisher and retain the right to profit from further uses of them. Freelancer-written articles published in the *JNCI* as a government publication went into the public domain—in effect, the people owned the copyright—a situation understood and accepted by freelancers who write for government publications. The copyright for freelancer-written articles published in the *JNCI* as OUP publications should remain with the writer. OUP, however, has begun to demand that freelancers sign over their copyrights for the sole, perpetual benefit of this privately owned British company.

Copyright law in this country derives from Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution, which authorizes Congress to provide for protection of creative works in order to encourage "authors and inventors." There is no mention of encouraging publishers. The *JNCI*'s outside contributors should not have to give up the copyrights granted them by U.S. law simply to accommodate a British publishing company.

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On the Antibiotic Frontier

In their article "Exploitation of mammalian host cell functions by bacterial pathogens" (2 May, p. 718), B. Brett Finlay and Pascale Cossart state (p. 718), "No new class of antibiotic has been discovered in the past three decades, and derivatives of current antibiotics soon encounter resistance." During the past 15 years, a group of small cationic antibiotic peptides has been shown to be produced by several animal species, including the cecropins of insects, the magainins of amphibian skin, and the defensins of mammalian neutrophils (*1*). The simple chemical structures of many of these antibiotics enabled the use of solid-phase peptide synthesis technology to rapidly create thousands of structural analogs and derivatives, some of which are currently in clinical trails (*2*).

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We agree with Wade's statement regarding the antibacterial activity of small cationic peptides and their promise as therapeutic agents. In our article, our statement referred to antibiotics that are currently in clinical use—no new chemical class of antibiotic has been introduced into clinical practice since 1981. At present, only one cationic peptide has passed phase III trials and shows equivalence to a quinolone against a localized infection, although there are several others under consideration.

Unfortunately, there are few other new types of antibiotics close to clinical use, although there are many compounds that are under development (*1*). These include a small number of protein synthesis and cell wall inhibitors. Lipid A inhibitors are in early stages, and other drugs under development are derivatives of existing antibiotics (such as vancomycin). The lack of new types of antibiotics emphasizes the need to understand the mechanisms of bacterial pathogenicity, which can then be applied to developing new therapeutics.

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Environmental Economics and Ecological Economics

The Random Samples item about a new Ph.D. program in ecological economics at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute ("Eco-Pioneering at RPI", 16 May, p. 1037) could leave readers with the mistaken impression that "conventionally trained economists" shun all environmental issues. Ph.D.-level courses in environmental economics thrive at dozens of institutions [check the listings of graduate programs courtesy of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists (AERE) at gopher://UKCC.uky.edu/0text AERE-G!191/GRADS.TXT].

Since the field evolved from the older disciplines of land economics and agricultural economics, the natural home for these Ph.D. programs at many institutions is a department of agricultural and resource economics. At an institution such as the University of California at Los Angeles, however, with no "ag econ" department, we