A researcher says that he uses "Macintoshes extensively for collecting and analyzing scientific data" and plans "to continue to do so in the future." A publisher says that a "range of electronic products and services" forestalls the need for a "proposed new journal." And "advice and support" are offered to the new head of the "World Health Organization."

Apple Corps

Now that Apple is posting incredible profits and the business magazines and trade papers have put a hiatus on the "Apple is dead" stories, we are treated to one in *Science*'s Compass: "Softening support for Macintoshes" by Kevin Ahern (Nota Bene, 24 July, p. 529). What on Earth was the point of this item? True, Apple's market share may have fallen in 1996 and 1997, but that was because they licensed their operating system to clone manufacturers such as Motorola and PowerComputing. Now that those licenses have been revoked, Apple's market share (for June 1998, a full month before this story was printed) was 9.4%, or just 1.1% below Packard Bell (*1*).

Information systems (IS) managers have long preferred Wintel boxes (a Windows operating system on an Intel processor) for "political" reasons. Even though Wintel boxes are extremely difficult to use and crash-prone, those very qualities call for more support staff and powerful IS departments (*2*), as Ahern notes. However, those of us in the laboratory use Macintoshes extensively for collecting and analyzing scientific data and plan to continue to do so in the future. Perhaps Merck & Co. should talk to the navy about the U.S.S. Yorktown episode (*3*) before switching "its 6000-plus base of lab Macintosh machines to Windows NT systems."

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Response

My note did not declare "Apple is dead." Surely it is not, but I presented three pieces of evidence showing that support for Macs in laboratories is softening. There was not space on the page to include some of the good news: On the software front, sales of Oxford Molecular's popular MacVector molecular biology product for the Macintosh are booming. MacVector sales in 1997 were up over 60% and are up again in 1998. Although part of the increase is attributed to merging of the company's discontinued GeneWorks product with MacVector, current sales of MacVector are greater than the sum of both products previously.

Apple's recovery has more to do with profitability than with increased market share for Macintoshes. The total share of the market for Macs has not increased significantly since Apple became profitable. By the way, I am an avid Mac user who also would like for Macs to succeed, but I cannot argue with the data.

Kevin Ahern

Journal Proliferation

As the publisher of *Tetrahedron Letters*, I read with interest the item "Cheaper chemistry journal" (ScienceScope, 3 July, p. 21). The proposed new journal, *Organic Chemistry Letters*, will be launched in 1999 by the American Chemical Society, with the active support of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). At a price of $2300, the twice-monthly journal will, at least initially, be cheaper to libraries than the weekly *Tetrahedron Letters*. It remains to be seen whether it will represent better value for the money.

I can understand the frustrations of librarians faced with shrinking budgets and rising journal prices, but it is ironic that ARL thinks that the further proliferation of journals is the solution. Leading scientific publishers have already launched a range of electronic products and services that will provide scientists with access to more relevant literature in a more cost-effective way. Our readers tell us they want greater integration, not more fragmentation. Launching a new journal in a field already well served, whether it is distributed on papyrus, paper, or personal computer, is yesterday's approach masquerading as tomorrow's solution. *Cui bono?*

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R_x for WHO

The editorial "Reaching out for world health" by Gro Harlem Brundtland (26 June, p. 2027) was inspiring. As the new Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), she should have the best in advice and support. Having completed a yearlong study in the effectiveness of WHO last year (*1*), we would like to offer both.

WHO has been accused of mismanagement, corruption, favoritism in appointments, and drifting without direction across an ocean of special interests. It was not always this way. Beginning in 1948, WHO led the charge against the disease scourges of humanity. For more than 20 years, its mission and commitment attracted first-rate professionals. Its leadership in eradicating smallpox in 1977 was a crowning glory.

To take control of her drifting ship, Brundtland will have to establish priorities that reflect the world's health needs. WHO should not pursue goals at the city or national level, where competence exists and communities choose their priorities. WHO must concentrate on its ability to provide global action on priorities recommended in a report (*2*) that WHO supported in 1996.

WHO/ZAFAR

A little discomfort can be a good thing.

The first priority is to combat resurging infectious diseases, which cannot be contained by nations acting alone. Tuberculosis has returned in new, antibiotic-resistant forms and has lately impelled New York and other large cities to spend as much as $1 billion a year in treatment and prevention. Malaria annually strikes a quarter of a billion new victims worldwide and kills a million children.

Second, effective global systems of public health should be developed that use the best in computing, telecommunications, and information handling. Ever-vigilant "SWAT teams" should be created to track and respond to outbreaks of dangerous diseases. Such teams could be assembled only by pooling and managing scarce public-health resources from many countries.

Third, as mandated by changing demographics, nations should be helped to share the most successful approaches for coping with noncommunicable diseases such as cancer, diabetes (cases of which are likely to treble in the next 30 years), and heart disease.

To succeed at this mammoth task, decentralization must occur at WHO. Successful global organizations learn this lesson. One example is Asea Brown Boveri, where 100 managers in the Zurich headquarters (less than 1% of the total staff) oversee a $36 billion global firm with more than 200,000 employees who conduct engineering operations and services. Contrast this efficiency with WHO's profile: more than a third of its 4500 staff sit at desks in Geneva.

WHO's business is human lives. There is not another moment or dollar to waste.

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Oceans and Climate Shifts

An article "As the oceans switch, climate shifts" by Richard A. Kerr (News Focus, 10 July, p. 157) presents a timely summary of latest studies on large-scale oscillations in the climate system with (multi-) decadal time scales. Emphasized in the article are near-global or basin-wide patterns like PDO (Pacific Decadal Oscillation). Presumably, an underlying assumption is that decadal sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies must be distributed near globally or, at least, as broadly as El Niño–related anomalies whose time scales are shorter than a decade. Influence of El Niño spreads widely over the extratropics through atmospheric "teleconnection" and forces SST underneath to change. A pattern like PDO would emerge if a similar "teleconnection" occurs also on the decadal scale.

Yet, if midlatitude oceanic processes play an active role in the decadal variability independently of tropical processes, then significant SST anomalies associated with the midlatitude mode may be confined within a local oceanic gyre or even along a narrow oceanic front. Several recent studies suggest that is likely the case. Over the North Pacific basin, decadal SST fluctuations correlated with the tropical variability were confined in the subtropical frontal zone. Stronger decadal fluctuations were observed in the subarctic frontal zone, but unlike in PDO they exhibited no simultaneous correlation with the tropical variability (*1*). This is suggestive of the presence of decadal variability inherent to the North Pacific atmosphere-ocean system, although the associated atmospheric anomalies extends over the North America.

An empirical orthogonal function analysis applied globally tends to preferentially extract a near-global pattern like PDO. The PDO time series presented apparently includes decadal and shorter time scales, implying that part of decadal anomalies generated in midlatitudes may be mixed up in PDO with near-global anomalies associated with El Niño.

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