of collections and the provision of technological infrastructure for analysis cannot be separated and proposes setting up a Conservation Genetics Institute. Our present objectives as stated in the Policy Forum are less ambitious: We want only to discover which (if any) of the described and evaluated species listed as endangered in the International Conservation Union (IUCN) Red Book [used as the basis for the Wildlife Conservation and Monitoring Centre (WCMC) Web site we referenced] represent securely stored DNA or tissue samples. The purpose of our suggestion was to draw attention to the urgent need to save genetic resources, an action that serves and facilitates all the other activities.

We agree with Poinar and Eglinton that more focused research on the long term storage of DNA would be useful. We feel, however, that we should not wait to establish DNA collections. Although preservation of DNA in frozen source tissues may provide the best means of reducing the rate of degradation, all freezers break down and the cost of a "fail-safe" system of freezers will be very large compared to the storage of DNA at room temperature. Even before a hundred years is up, it will likely be possible to sequence genomic DNA rapidly and, if sufficient amounts of DNA have been saved, to overcome many of the problems of degradation that have taken place in that relatively short interval. The immediate requirement is to obtain cells and DNA from threatened and endangered species and preserve it as best we can until it can be sequenced.

We also wish to clarify that the International Biodiversity Observation Year (IBOY) 2001-2002 is an initiative of DIVERSITAS, the international program of biodiversity science, co-sponsored by the International Union of Biological Sciences (IUBS), the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Council for Science (ICSU), the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE), the International Geosphere Biosphere Program (IGBP), and the International Union of Microbiological Sciences (IUMS). Further information on the IBOY can be found at http://www.nrel.colostate.edu/IBOY.

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Stranger than Science Fiction

Thank you for the reference to me in "Plan 9 from EuroSpace" (Random Samples, 7 Jul., p. 41). I was intrigued by the European Space Agency's recent announcement that they are scouring through science fiction in search of new space propulsion technologies. It is further proof that science fiction is now being taken very seriously by scientists.

My proposal for a network of communications satellites in geosynchronous orbit, however, was not made in a work of science fiction. It was in a technical paper entitled "Extra Terrestrial Relays" written in the summer of 1945, and printed in the British journal *Wireless World* in October of that year.

This paper is now on display at various exhibitions and aerospace museums, including the Smithsonian. It is also found in my collection of technical papers, *Ascent to Orbit* (Wiley, New York, 1984).

Sir Arthur C. Clarke
"Leslie's House," 25, Barnes Place, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka

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