The AAAS Sections

The AAAS has been organized into disciplinary sections since its beginning. But what exactly are the sections, and what do they do?

The number and diversity of disciplines and interests represented by the section groupings have grown from the two sections established at the first AAAS meeting in September 1848—"Natural History and Geology" and "General Physics"—to the current total of 21 with the formation, in 1973, of Section X (General).

Sections range in size from Section P (Industrial Science) with 637 members and Section U (Statistics) with 717 members, to Section G (Biological Sciences) with 23,266 members and Section N (Medical Sciences) with 20,770 members. Of the Association's approximately 130,000 individual members, some 80 percent are enrolled in one or more sections.

All 283 affiliated societies and academies of science are required to enroll in one or more section. Again, the range of these groups gives an impression of the scope of interests represented by the AAAS. Seventy-seven affiliate groups are enrolled in Section X (General), 66 in Section G (Biological Sciences), 51 in Section N (Medical Sciences), 36 in Section M (Engineering), and 33 each in Sections K and Q (Social and Economic Sciences and Education). Other sections have as few as four or five affiliate societies enrolled.

William D. Carey, AAAS executive officer, says the sections are able to act, on a somewhat limited basis, as resources for the Association.

He cites several instances where he has called upon sections for their expertise. Section T (Information, Computing, and Communication) provided input for the White House Conference on Library and Information Services, and Section N (Medical Sciences) has reviewed proposed health standards. Members of Section P (Industrial Science) have made a special effort to stimulate interest in AAAS in industry. Section Q (Education) is planning a special conference on the learning process, to be cosponsored by the AAAS and the Academy of Independent Scholars. The project is being directed by section chairperson Joseph D. Novak (Cornell University) and Kenneth E. Boulding, AAAS Board chairperson and co-president of the Academy of Independent Scholars.

The yearly business meetings of the sections (held during the annual meeting) provide good feedback, Carey states, concerning many areas of governance of the AAAS.

"The one thing which I have asked the sections to do, and which has not been done," asserts Carey, "is to feed ideas into *Science* and *Science 80*." I would like to see the sections, with their knowledge of what is going on in the various disciplines, make suggestions to the editors of both AAAS magazines."

The business of the sections is managed by a section committee comprised of the section officers (retiring chairperson, chairperson, chairperson-elect, and secretary), four members-at-large, Council delegate(s), and one representative of each affiliate enrolled in the section.

The sections are involved, through their Council representation, with the legislative decision-making process of the Association. They also are charged with nominating their outstanding members for AAAS Fellowship status. But the principal activity of the sections has been, since their inception, the arranging of annual meeting symposia.

According to the Association's Constitution ". . . Under the direction of the Section Secretary, and within the context of overall plans for scientific meetings of the Association, each Section Committee may arrange such Section contributions to those meetings as it deems desirable."

Section involvement in the planning of the annual meeting has become more sophisticated in recent years. Many sections have specific goals in mind as they put together their meeting symposia.

Robert A. Wiley (Department of Pharmacy, University of Kansas), secretary of Section S (Pharmaceutical Sciences), says his section, "wants to catalyze cross-disciplinary interchange among section members and present some of the more important drug-related issues for consideration by the AAAS membership at large. The section has tried to present two symposia at each meeting. One would relate to public policy issues, the other would be an interdisciplinary 'hard' science presentation."

Plans Begin for 1980–81 Regional Energy Seminar Series

Planning will begin this month for the 1980–81 AAAS Regional Energy Seminars funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. Four seminars will be held in various locations around the country. The aim is to bring together people who are concerned with and knowledgeable in the fields of science and engineering related to energy and those who make public policy decisions. One of the seminars will deal with Native American energy concerns.

The structure of the seminars will be determined by subject matter and local considerations. The seminars are usually 1 to 2 days in length. Typical cosponsors are groups such as Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society; universities; and scientific, public interest, and governmental entities.

Topics from the 1979–80 seminars included initiatives in energy research policy, solar technologies, energy in rural America, and energy resource development on Native American lands. Future potential topics should involve some phase of the scientific, technical, social, and/or economic aspects of energy policy for the nation.

Groups interested in co-sponsoring a seminar should contact Patricia S. Curlin, regional energy seminar coordinator, at the AAAS address, telephone (202) 467-4310. Information concerning criteria used by AAAS in site evaluation will be furnished upon request.

Section O (Agriculture) points to two symposia they arranged which drew great interest outside the agricultural community—"The Use of 2,4,5-T in Viet Nam," presented in 1969, and "Energy and Food Production: Contemporary Technology and Alternatives," presented in 1976.

Coyt T. Wilson (Blacksburg, Virginia), secretary of Section O, maintains that his section's work in planning annual meeting symposia is important because, "agricultural scientists also need to communicate with those whose primary interests are in other disciplines, including natural resources, the environmental sciences, the social sciences, government, cultural anthropology, history, and economics. The symposia sponsored or co-sponsored by Section O at the annual meetings provide an opportunity for communication among these diverse groups. Section O also enhances communication among the agricultural and biological sciences represented by its affiliates. Finally, the symposia provide an opportunity for discussion of broad issues in which agricultural scientists and non-agricultural scientists share mutual interests."

The secretary of Section N (Medical Sciences), Leah Lowenstein (School of Medicine, Boston University Medical Center), says her section "organizes four to six symposia . . . on the advances in timely and important aspects of medicine and health policy. The symposia are also a means of reporting research that is at the interface between medicine and the scientific disciplines of other members of the AAAS." Recent Section N symposia include those on advances in gerontology, health policies for the 1980's, and endorphins.

Some of the most successful symposia presented at recent AAAS meetings have been those resulting from collaboration between sections. At the 1980 meeting in San Francisco, Sections L (History and Philosophy of Science) and N (Medical Sciences) sponsored "Ethical Issues in Human Reproduction Technologies: Analysis by Women." Section L also worked with Section B (Physics) to put on "Science and Pseudoscience."

One outstanding symposium, "Sociobiology: Beyond Nature-Nurture," at the AAAS annual meeting in Washington, D.C., in 1978, was the work of seven sections: G (Biological Sciences), H (Anthropology), J (Psychology), K (Social and Economic Sciences), L (History and Philosophy of Science), Q (Education), and X (General).

Emphasizing this interaction and the interdependence of the scientific disciplines is a key element in the role of the Association. As they have since 1848, the sections continue to provide the vital linkages between the AAAS and the specific scientific and engineering disciplines.

Any member who is not currently enrolled in a section and would like to be should write to AAAS Member Records at the AAAS address.

JOAN WRATHER
Office of Public Information

Science 80 Goes Monthly

Beginning with the anniversary issue in November, *Science 80* will publish ten issues per year (monthly, but with combined January/February and July/August issues).

At its April meeting the AAAS Board of Directors approved the increase in frequency on a schedule slightly ahead of that originally contemplated, reflecting good experience during the first year of operation and growing editorial capability.

Reader response to the magazine has on the whole been extremely positive during the initial year. Pay-up rates on credit orders and early renewal rates have both been very high compared to most general audience magazines, and editorial surveys of the readership find an equally high level of satisfaction among 80 percent of those surveyed. More than 400,000 copies of the magazine are now being mailed to subscribers, with each copy attracting on average between 3.0 and 3.5 readers. Readers report that they typically spend a couple of hours with the magazine, going back to it several times.

Some early problems were experienced in handling subscription orders at the fulfillment house, but performance there has improved. (Any AAAS member still having difficulties with *Science 80* subscriptions should communicate the details to Carol LePere, circulation director, at the AAAS, 1515 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005.)

Reaction to the magazine has been favorable in other ways, too. The cover story in the July/August issue, reporting the finding of bacteria 3½ billion years old—the oldest proof of early life yet discovered—was picked up on the front page of *The New York Times* and featured in news magazines. Several other