tion that the customary safeguards will continue to operate as the video screen starts to replace the printed page: committees of experts will evaluate and editors will exercise judgment.

To be truly attuned to the potential of microprocessor-based technology, an electronic journal must be more than printed pages on a screen. The full potential of data-base techniques must be realized if this expensive, still-clumsy system is to be recognized as an improvement over the print medium that has served us so splendidly for more than 500 years and is far from being superseded.

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Editors are rightfully concerned about the quality of manuscripts published in electronic journals without appropriate peer review and evaluation. Their fear that the speed of publication may entice scientists away from traditional journals is also not unfounded. Whether traditional editors are happy or not, the electronic journal, in one form or another, will become a reality. Given this simple fact, it behooves those concerned about the future quality of scientific and technical publications to establish a suitable peer review process for these journals.

The technology itself contains the seeds of a potentially powerful "quality filter for information" (*1*) in the form of electronic "letters to the editor." If, while the manuscript is on-line, every reader could immediately enter his or her comments, then, upon editorial approval, those comments could be seen by every subsequent viewer of the manuscript. What better quality filter than the combined (and edited) comments of the readers? It can also be foreseen that hardcopy compendia of the best on-line manuscripts would be published.

While it is true that scientists may opt for quick publication to establish priority for what they may deem to be original ideas, results, and so forth, the same scientists will not want to read everything but will continue to favor manuscripts published in high-quality journals, electronic or otherwise. To meet the competition of speed of publication, traditional journals may opt to publish, in electronic form, editor-approved, but otherwise unrefereed articles, including tabular data. After publication of a refereed article, the corresponding unrefereed publication may be removed, but the tabular data could, nonetheless, remain in electronic form.

As is often the case when new technology has an impact on traditional activities, perceived problems can be resolved by other applications of the same technology.

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Health Problems of Colonists

I would like to comment on some of the observations on the public health problems among colonist populations along the Transamazon Highway presented by N. J. H. Smith in "Colonization lessons from a tropical forest" (13 Nov, p. 755). In reference to the colonization program, Smith states, ". . . human modification of the landscape favors disease transmission." In fact, the deforested areas served as protective barriers to the colonists from vectors of many tropical diseases, for example, leishmaniasis (*1*). Smith also writes that, ". . . the most important public health problems have been introduced by colonists" and that "Few of the zoonoses in the forest have actually infected settlers." There is no evidence that pathogens introduced by the colonists became a significant public health problem, while serological surveys and epidemiological studies provided conclusive evidence that colonists were subjected to a wide variety of endemic health hazards, including Altamira hemorrhagic fever, leishmaniasis, Mayaro fever, Mucambo virus, Guaroa virus, and Oropouche fever, with hunters and forest workers at greatest risk (*2*).

Since malaria was a significant problem in the Transamazon region before the colonization program, Smith's statement that it was imported into the area by the colonists is not correct (*3*). Smith also states that *Anopheles darlingi* was implicated as a major vector of malaria along the highway and implies that alterations of drainage systems along the highway resulted in a proliferation of *A. darlingi* breeding sites. In fact, actual field data from 2 years of entomological surveillance in the areas discussed by Smith revealed *A. darlingi* populations at only two isolated sites (one near the Aratú river and one at Gleba 3/5, near the Xingú river) (*1, 4*). At all other sites sampled along approximately 800 kilometers of highway road-front, representing predominantly upland forest ecology, there was no evidence of *A. darlingi* (*1*). Furthermore, the age-sex distribution of malaria cases within the colonist population was compatible with exophilic transmission, that is, malaria generally was transmitted out-of-doors by secondary vector species (*5*).

Smith speculates that the DDT spray applied to colonists' houses was ineffective as a malaria control measure along the Transamazon Highway and cites as support two published works, neither of which includes data on the impact of DDT on the indoor biting activity of the malaria vectors. Evidence that colonists became infected with malaria does not demonstrate that the DDT spray program was ineffective. In this respect, one should consider what the malaria problem might have been had there been no malaria control effort. Ironically, after Smith criticizes the Transamazon colonization program, he proposes that future colonization take place along the river systems. Since the principal vector (*A. darlingi*) is a riverine species, such a colonization scheme might well take place under high-risk circumstances for malaria transmission.

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Correction

In the briefing "OSHA's new thoughts on cancer policy" (News and Comment, 2 July, p. 35), Philip Landrigan was incorrectly identified. Landrigan is director of the Division of Surveillance, Hazard Evaluations, and Field Studies at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.