

evolution and what has been well established in the scientific literature (1).

Also, contrary to reports in the scientific press that the Pygmies were the first in Central Africa to carry the AIDS virus, our research (soon to be published), does not detect the AIDS virus among the Pygmies.

While all studies of the human immunodeficiency virus should be highly encouraged, scientific ethics dictate that the research should be conducted for scientific purposes and that it would be best to avoid any prejudice that might jeopardize the spirit of collaboration that is needed to eradicate this devastating disease.

**Donatien Mavoungou**

Chief Researcher,

Omar Bongo University, and

Vice-President of the Pan-African Union of Science and Technologies, Libreville, Gabon

#### REFERENCES

1. R. M. Hendry *et al.*, *Lancet* ii, 455 (1986); T. Huet *et al.*, *Nature* 345, 356 (1990); C. Rouzioux *et al.*, *2nd Int. Conf. on AIDS, Paris, France, Abstr.* (L'Association pour la Recherche sur les Déficiences Immunitaires Viro-Induits, Paris, 1986).

#### Healthy Museum

In Elizabeth Culotta's article "Museums cut research in hard times" (News & Comment, 29 May, p. 1268), a reference to the American Museum of Natural History needs correction and clarification. We are not anticipating any reduction in operating budgets for research. Some reductions came in fiscal year 1990-1991 in the wake of New York City's financial crisis. These reductions were limited to nonsalary expenses, such as travel, phone use, and supplies. There was no reduction in scientific staffing, either through attrition or lay-offs. In fact, several science positions have been added and additional positions have been approved for fiscal year 1993. Thus, the scope and magnitude of our research activities have actually increased.

Our healthy picture does not, however, mitigate the current difficulties for research in the natural history museum community. In a world so caught up in the biodiversity crisis and other environmental issues, it is tragic that the research institutions so committed to these problems for decades are so poorly understood and supported. I strongly endorse the flourishing of more creative and topical offerings in museum exhibition and

education. But these programs cannot be decoupled from research. The dinosaurs that greet millions of visitors to the American Museum of Natural History every year were, after all, collected by scientists on research expeditions. Those scientists are our Rembrandts and Leonardos; their creative work must be fed and supported.

**Michael J. Novacek**

Vice President and Dean of Science,  
American Museum of Natural History,  
Central Park West at 79th Street,  
New York, NY 10024-5192

#### Clear Vision

In his review of Lawrence B. Slobodkin's book *Simplicity and Complexity in Games of the Intellect* (15 May, p. 1034), David L. Goodstein is appropriately suspicious of Slobodkin's assertion that after cataract extraction one can "see in the infrared." The retina is simply not triggered by wavelengths longer than 750 nanometers, and no amount of filtering the incoming light will induce the retina to "see in the infrared."

The crystalline lens ordinarily yellows with age, and if it gets opacified (cataractous) it may also darken to a yellowish brown. This color change blocks the shorter bluish wavelengths more than it blocks the longer red and infrared wavelengths. When this obstruction to clear vision (the cataractous lens) is removed, many patients remark that the world seems distressingly bright and blue for the first few days. A shift in the spectral composition of the light reaching the retina has indeed taken place, but even if this were a shift toward the red (which it is not), the retina would not suddenly start "seeing in the infrared."

Goodstein's review leads me to suspect that Slobodkin knows these things very well and that he was just doing some free-form slalom—and missed one of his flags.

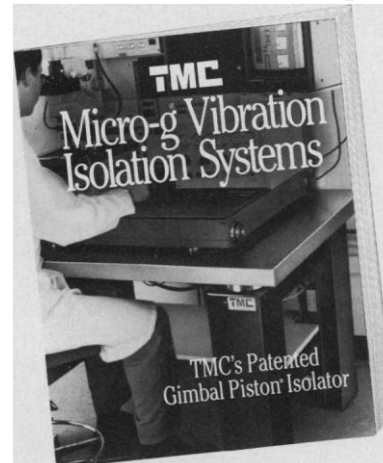
**H. Stanley Thompson**

Department of Ophthalmology,  
University of Iowa,  
Iowa City, IA 52242

#### Corrections and Clarifications

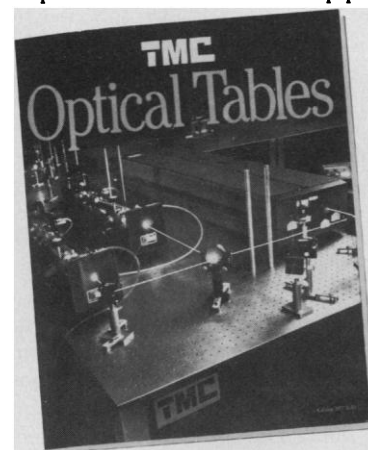
The photograph accompanying the News item "MIT techies help keep the America's Cup" (Random Samples, 29 May, p. 1277) shows the boat *Stars and Stripes*, not *America*<sup>3</sup>, as was stated in the caption.

# NEW CATALOGS



## Vibration Isolation Systems

New fourth-generation Micro-g® Gimbal Piston® Vibration Isolation Lab Tables. Features include higher isolation performance, modular construction, contemporary industrial design. Catalog also contains Table Top Platforms, Floor Platforms, and technical comparisons of isolators and top plates.



## Optical Tables

Latest catalog covers six standard lines of TMC steel honeycomb optical tables including patented, spill-proof CleanTop®. Discusses design, construction and features, with cost/performance comparisons and selection guides.

**SEND FOR YOUR COPIES**

# TMC

**Technical Manufacturing Corporation**  
15 Centennial Drive • Peabody, MA 01960  
1-800-542-9725 • 508-532-6330

TMC-42 FAX 508-531-8682

Circle No. 8 on Readers' Service Card