



Cheap set?

Among scientists, space exploration may have lost a certain cutting-edge feel amid more immediate concerns such as bioterrorism. But in Hollywood, NASA rules. Or at least it did 24 September, when dozens of movie producers and directors Barry Rosenbush (*Scary Movie 2*) and Bill Borden (*End of Days*) trooped up to nearby Pasadena to visit the agency's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL).

The unusual gathering was the brainchild of Hollywood consultant Robert Shapiro. Awed by a space shuttle launch last year, Shapiro persuaded NASA to hire him to reignite the American passion for exploring the unknown.

A group of senior space agency officials, including space science chief Ed Weiler, spent the day laying out NASA's long-range plans for exploration and

Shuttle Diplomacy

technology. They exhorted the gathered moguls to think big, and the listeners seemed game. "We're looking for a way to make big, expensive movies without spending a lot of money," said Borden. "And why spend 4 or 5 months building a set when NASA has it for free?" JPL officials say that since the meeting, they've been deluged with requests for more information and assistance.

New Anthropology Group

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) acts as an umbrella for a host of groups—such as black, Latino, feminist, gay, student, and senior anthropologists. Now another constituency is seeking recognition: scientists. Some scholars, complaining of "antiscience" tendencies in AAA, will officially launch a new section—the Society for Anthropological Sciences—at the AAA annual meeting in New Orleans in November.

Many anthropologists have been griping for years that AAA has been hijacked by the post-modern wing of cultural anthro-

pology, where scholarly approaches are drawn more from the humanities than the sciences. In particular, cultural anthropologists who take cognitive or evolutionary approaches to their work have felt that they had no professional "home," says Stuart Plattner, director for cultural anthropology at the National Science Foundation (NSF).

In recent years, says Elizabeth Cashdan of the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, who specializes in human evolutionary ecology, "there are many of us who have simply quit the AAA altogether." She says she and col-

leagues were also upset by the way AAA leaders handled the controversy over *Darkness in El Dorado*, which accused anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon of unethical conduct in South America (*Science*, 19 January 2001, p. 416). The final catalyst for the action, says Plattner, was the rejection by meeting organizers of several scientific sessions, including one on "distributed cognition" and one on an NSF workshop for Ph.D. students. These will now be presented at a 2-day symposium in New Orleans under the banner "Salon des Refusés." David Kronenfeld of the University of California, Riverside, says empirical approaches are getting short shrift across the board, so the group is hoping to attract members from archaeology, physical anthropology, and linguistics as well as cultural anthropology.

AAA spokesperson Ghita Levine says AAA is "sad these people are upset," but a new group is a good idea "if that's what they feel they need." She says conference organizers didn't single anyone out for exclusion: They rejected nearly 20% of all papers submitted. And as for the charge that AAA is getting less scientific, Levine says: "Other people feel that there's a lot of science."

Harvard apparently hasn't lost its touch. It ranks number one among the top 100 federally funded U.S. universities in terms of citation impact, according to the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) in Philadelphia. ISI ranked universities by the frequency of their "top 10" appearances in 21 fields of science and social science from 1997 to 2001.

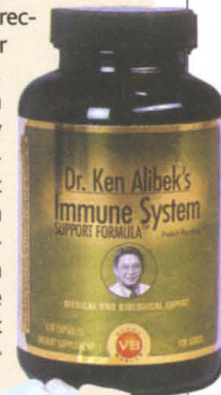
Harvard Forever

Rank	University	Fields in Top Ten
1.	Harvard	15
2.	Stanford	11
3.	MIT	9
4.	UC San Diego	9
5.	Yale	8
6.	UC Berkeley	8
7.	Columbia	8
8.	Caltech	7
9.	U. Michigan	7
10.	Duke	6

Harvard and Stanford also topped the last ranking, in 1998. Columbia and Duke are newcomers to the list.

Biowarfare Expert Branches Out

Kenneth Alibek, the former Soviet biowarfare expert who defected to the U.S. in 1992, has truly embraced his adopted country—including its capitalist ways. Last month, Alibek, chief scientist at a biotech company and director of the Center for Biodefense at George Mason University (GMU) in northern Virginia, lent his name to a nutritional supplement, "Dr. Ken Alibek's Immune System Support Formula."



"Your Body Is Under Constant Attack!" cry the full-page ads. The concoction of vitamins, minerals, and a proprietary bacterial mix—a month's supply costs \$59.95 plus tax and shipping—will help ward off those attacks, says the former communist. He says the pills have nothing to do with his research on how the body can defend against bioterrorist agents—he just acted as a consultant to Vital Basics, the Portland, Maine-based company that produces the pills.

Some colleagues say they at first thought the ad was a spoof and wonder how Alibek's commercial adventure will affect his scientific credibility. "What's the experimental basis?" asks virologist Peter Jahrling of the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases in Fort Detrick, Maryland. "This is snake oil." But Christopher Hill, GMU vice provost for research, says there's nothing improper about Alibek's sideline as long as he doesn't make false claims or suggest that GMU supports his pills.