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The American Association for the Advancement of Science was founded in 1848 and incorporated in 1874. Its objects are to further the work of scientists, to facilitate cooperation among them, to improve the effectiveness of science in the promotion of human welfare, and to increase public understanding and appreciation of the importance and promise of the methods of science in human progress.

Science Reporting

The reporting of scientific news has become a controversial matter. On 18 December, Robert C. Toth in the *New York Times* (Western edition) raised a question concerning the release of news of space research—specifically, Mariner II results.

... Should the discoveries be given to the press as soon as available? Or should they, like other scientific results, be given first to the scientific community as some scientists demand?

The public, whose tax funds financed the experiments, have a stake in the matter.

Toth was unhappy with policies of the American Institute of Physics. These were set forth in the 1 January 1960 issue of *Physical Review Letters*:

Scientific discoveries are not the proper subject for newspaper scoops. ... In the future, we may reject papers whose main contents have been published previously in the daily press.

In its 1 November 1962 issue, the *Applied Physics Letters* of the Institute adopted a similar policy:

Work described elsewhere, for example, in press releases or in the form of abstracts of contributed papers, prior to scheduled publication in A.P.L., will not be considered eligible for publication.

Recently I have been urged by the American Institute of Physics to adhere to their position. Although generally sympathetic to their stand, I cannot completely agree. The policy seems rigid, and the attitude toward abstracts of scientific papers severe. I feel that newspapers and scientific journals are not in serious competition with each other. These media are worlds apart in audience, coverage, and precision of technical detail. It is true that the volume of news of science in daily newspapers is increasing. In Washington and New York, coverage is excellent: the writers are exceptionally competent, and sometimes adequate space is devoted to their stories. In other parts of the country science reporting ranges from fair to downright mediocre, or there is none at all. Some good, authoritative material is provided by the wire services, but local editors butcher it with a heavy hand. The material which is printed is usually gee-whiz, Buck Rogers distortions of the facts. Science writers for the wire services, wanting their copy to be used, tend to seek the more glamorous items. With distressing frequency scientist-operators are able to flim-flam the science writers with news stories which excite the imagination but have no solid technical basis. Local editors are especially susceptible to these worthless baubles, which they run in preference to less exciting items of solid merit.

The alert scientist gives only limited credence to newspaper stories. He finds them valuable as indicators of important events. To obtain full details and sufficient information to judge the validity of a claim, he knows he must consult the scientific literature.

It is tempting to try to reform operators by denying them publication in scientific journals. This mechanism would create a distortion of the true functions of journals. Other, and better, mechanisms are available. The major responsibility properly rests at the local level—with the man's scientific colleagues, with his superiors, and with properly constituted news bureaus.—P.H.A.