

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

Science serves its readers as a forum for the presentation and discussion of important issues related to the advancement of science, including the presentation of minority or conflicting points of view, rather than by publishing only material on which a consensus has been reached. Accordingly, all articles published in *Science*—including editorials, news and comment, and book reviews—are signed and reflect the individual views of the authors and not official points of view adopted by the AAAS or the institutions with which the authors are affiliated.

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Readers' Judgment

Periodically, we ask a sample of readers to react to selected features or policies of *Science*. In response to past questionnaires, readers have consistently said they consider the lead articles to be of greater interest or professional value than any of the other sections of the magazine. This preference was confirmed in the most recent study, in which we asked for readers' judgment in three different ways: In what order do you turn to the major features of *Science*? In what order do you rank them in terms of interest to you? How would you reallocate available space among the several sections? Of course the answers varied. Some readers go through an issue systematically from front to back. Others turn first to whichever section they usually find of greatest interest. Some prefer one section; others prefer another. Some wanted to expand and others to contract each section. Nevertheless, majority judgments were unequivocal.

On the basis of all the rankings of each respondent, the several sections fall into the following order of preference: lead articles are in first place by a substantial margin (two-thirds of the readers ranked the lead articles as first or second choice); research reports and the News and Comment section are about tied for second place (between 40 and 50 percent gave each of these sections first or second rank); letters, the editorial, and book reviews are bunched; and the section of meeting reports trails.

Science is written for scientists. It is therefore encouraging, even if not surprising, to find the scientific content highly regarded. But *Science* is more than a scientific journal. Sometimes in lead articles and often in letters, editorials, and News and Comment, *Science* publishes a substantial amount of material on social policy, government actions, university trends, and other matters affecting science education. Publication of such material is consistent with the Board of Directors' intent that the magazine serve as a forum for the discussion of problems of concern to scientists. Rarely does the Association take a position on a controversial issue; each individual scientist can reach his own judgment on matters that interest him. *Science* can help by serving as a forum for discussion of current problems and controversial issues. Sometimes the presentation is balanced, analytical, historical, or interpretive. At other times it is frankly partisan, and when it is, a rebuttal or an expression of another point of view by a different author frequently follows in a later issue.

In the most recent questionnaire, readers were asked how well they thought we have succeeded in providing a forum for all shades of responsible opinion on matters especially relevant to the scientific community. Ninety-five percent said they thought we have succeeded reasonably well, and 5 percent disagreed.

We also asked if the material appearing in *Science* has seemed too conservative, about right, or too radical. The replies indicated that 10 percent thought the magazine too conservative, 88 percent thought it about right, and 2 percent considered it too radical.

In a similar question, readers were asked whether the material in *Science* was too controversial. Two percent thought it was; 80 percent considered it about right; and 18 percent said it was not controversial enough.

The thoughtful judgments of readers, whether expressed in response to questionnaires or through individual letters, serve as valuable guides to all who share responsibility for planning and managing *Science*. The results summarized here may also be of interest to readers who wish to compare their own judgments with those of the majority.—DAEL WOLFLE