Getzinger: New International Head

When Dick Getzinger ran for a spot on the Los Alamos, N.M., county council, he was a desk-bound nuclear energy researcher with a vague yearning to extend his horizons beyond the laboratory walls.

Today, more than 15 years later, Getzinger’s horizons encompass the world as he takes on the job of heading the AAAS International Directorate beginning November 5.

Getzinger brings to the Association a wealth of global experience as a federal science and technology officer, including a 10-year stint in the Foreign Service—most recently at the U.S. embassy in Tokyo as counselor for scientific and technological affairs. In addition, he has held similar posts in Ottawa, Canada, and Vienna, Austria.

“It was—and still is—hard to give up the lab,” says Getzinger, who has worked extensively on arms control issues since gaining his Ph.D. in chemical engineering from the University of California at Berkeley.

“To see good data and a simple theory that explains them still gives me a tug,” he adds.

But as Los Alamos County Council chair and later as a member of New Mexico Senator Pete Domenici’s staff in Washington, the “attraction of dealing with people” as well as science was strong enough to propel him toward a career in public service. “It’s important to translate what’s going on in the lab” so that policymakers can make good decisions, he says.

Although Getzinger says he does not come to the International Directorate with an agenda, he eagerly anticipates progress in such areas as assistance to developing countries, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe [see story, p. 1155], post–Cold War arms control strategies, and the race to understand global climate change.

“These are exciting times,” says Getzinger. “We have to be willing to keep pace with the changes.”

Abelson Prize Honors First Elected Official

Thomas Moss was a 1974 AAAS Congressional Fellow the day he walked into U.S. Representative George Brown, Jr.’s Capitol Hill office for an interview. The California congressman invited Moss to sit down and then did something the scientist has always remembered.

“He told me about some of the things he’d been reading lately, including a piece by [German philosopher] Hannah Arendt,” recalls Moss, who today is dean of graduate studies and research at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio.

But what really struck Moss as refreshing was Brown “then asked me what I thought of her.”

Sixteen years later, Brown still seeks and advances the views of scientists in the interest of sound public policy. In recognition of his efforts on behalf of science and technology, AAAS has named Brown the 1990 winner of the Philip Hauge Abelson Prize, which comes with a $2500 award.

“U.S. Representative George Brown, Jr. (CA), winner of the 1990 AAAS Abelson Prize, is being cited for his efforts to advance science and technology policy over a 26-year career in Congress.”

Brown is the first elected official to be honored with the prize, which salutes “sustained exceptional contributions to advancing science” by a public servant or a scientist.

“George Brown has bridged the communication gap between the scientific and political communities” for most of his 26 years in Congress, says Moss, who was one of three scientists to nominate Brown for the award.

“And he has supported scientists in a manner that brings to them the realities of the political arena.”

Brown’s empathy for science comes from his own background in physics. “So many people in Congress tend to think solely in terms of economic benefit when it comes to basic science,” says Brown. “They don’t understand that you’ve got to keep the structure healthy.”

In an effort to build a sound structure for basic science within government, Brown was an early architect of the Office of Technology Assessment, which was established in 1972, and worked to reestablish the Office of Science and Technology Policy in 1976.

More recently, he has championed efforts to attract more women and minorities into science careers and to improve the nation’s scientific literacy. He is also a staunch supporter of alternative energy research.

“Every piece of legislation is in some sense an experiment,” says Brown. As in science, he feels policymaking is a matter of “objectively evaluating the results of what we are doing.”

“Great Wall” Article Wins Science Prize

Many have indulged in the ancient, idle pursuit of counting the stars that flicker across the night sky. But when Margaret Geller and John Huchra count whole galaxies, the results throw into question the very origins of the universe—and raise scores of new questions for cosmology to pursue.

Geller and Huchra are researchers at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and coauthors of “Mapping the Universe,” a landmark article that recently earned them the 1990 AAAS Newcomb Cleveland Prize, the annual recognition of an outstanding paper published in Science. The honor comes with a $5000 award.

Daniel E. Koshland, Jr., editor of Science and chair of the selection committee, says the paper is “fascinating to theorists and an experimental tour de force,” noting that “one reviewer called it one of the most important papers in cosmology in the last 5 years.”

The prize, which ranks as the
Abelson Prize Honors First Elected Official