Passing the Baton

IT IS WITH AWE AND DEEP RESPECT FOR THE WEIGHTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THOSE WHO HAVE passed before me that I assume the title of Editor-in-Chief of *Science*, one of less than a handful of journals that can claim to represent the spectrum of scientific endeavors and a truly international audience of authors and readers. Each editor-in-chief has come to this position with his (and now her!) own vision of how to use this opportunity to benefit the scientific community. Bruce Alberts has left an important legacy that I hope to continue and build upon.

To begin with, Bruce raised the visibility of the science education community and its myriad challenges. A sizable fraction of researchers are also science educators and care deeply about improving STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education. By providing a forum for their issues, Bruce energized those within and outside the education community to pursue essential reforms. He also increased the globalization of *Science* by reaching out to developing countries. Bruce, a tireless traveler, was forever striving to make *Science* more accessible to aspiring researchers no matter where they might be found. Himself a respected researcher, Bruce brought the perspective of the individual scientist to discussions of publication format, open access, the review process, and other publication matters. He addressed these issues with integrity in the forefront. He immediately recognized that access to the information provided by nonclassified research papers on H5N1 (avian flu) was critical for world health concerns and insisted on their controlled release in a manner that would neither compromise the integrity of publication nor present a potential health threat. Indeed, having the scientist’s perspective “at the top” helps ensure that *Science* evolves to serve the best interests of the scientific community, which depends on rapid communication of the most important results.

Without backing off on any of the priorities of my predecessor, my own top goal is to make *Science* the premier communications platform for accelerating advances in science, using the latest in modern technologies. Many excellent journals are geared toward disciplinary audiences. My view is that a journal such as *Science* that is read by researchers across a broad spectrum of fields has a special responsibility to publish papers that need to be communicated to scientists in fields outside of a narrow specialty, because new observations, technologies, processes, models, and results have the potential to revolutionize other areas of research. I would like to see *Science* publish even more of the best papers, that those papers are written so that their significance is broadly understood, and that computational methods, such as machine learning and natural language processes, can be harnessed to connect members of AAAS (the publisher of *Science*) to studies of interest.

The recently released report *ARISE 2* (Advancing Research in Science and Engineering) from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences makes recommendations for breaking down barriers to collaboration across sectors to promote fundamental advances in science and their translation into new products and services. Their number-one recommendation is that a “knowledge network” be developed that “enables investigators from different disciplines to identify opportunities, establish collaborative efforts, and focus disparate expertise and approaches on problems of common interest.” My hope is that *Science* can contribute to that knowledge network by promoting communication styles, technologies, and approaches that transcend individual disciplines. Clearly, *Science* cannot achieve recommendation number one alone, but I believe it is in a great position to be an important part of the solution.

— Marcia McNutt

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Online

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Podcast interview with author Marcia McNutt (http://scim.ag/ed_6137).

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Editor's Summary

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