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Refining the On-Line Scholar's Tools

Three months ago, Science began the second phase of our World Wide Web system for distributing information (see Science, 3 November 1995). With that issue, users of Science's on-line counterpart (at URL <http://science-mag.aaas.org/science/> were given new tools developed in collaboration with HighWire Press of Stanford University. As early as 5:00 p.m. eastern time on the day before the cover date, readers of the Science On-Line Web pages could search through the cumulative archives (back to 6 October 1995) of abstracts of all published Articles, Reports, Perspectives, and Policy Forums, as well as summaries of Research News and News and Comment items. Tables of Contents were also viewable back to 23 June 1995, when this digital campaign was launched. Our general objective in developing these features is to exploit the digital media channels and help readers navigate, select from, and organize the seas of information they confront daily.

In the near future, we will be introducing additional tools. Although many of our print readers may still be skeptical that such Web mania can meet their needs in scientific data gathering and analysis, we believe that we can significantly augment the value of the print journal through these new media, especially for readers in locations where mail delivery may be problematic or for whom rapid access to new and past items may be important.

Without giving away all of the features under development, we would like to provide enough detail about our future general direction to entice additional readers to sample our digital wares, along with the print offerings.

The electronic channels available to Science readers are also facilitating the ways in which we receive, review, and decide on submissions, and in fact helped our dedicated staff survive the Blizzard of 1996 and get the 12 January issue out almost undelayed. Staff walked in (one trudged 6 miles), skied in, or endured extremely long commuting times to ensure that a core group was here every day to keep the editorial and advertising pages on schedule for three different issues. Phones, faxes, modems, and e-mail provided a virtual office, allowing many of those stuck at home to work with those who made it in. New electronic procedures still in the test phase proved their worth under fire. These electronic tools, combined with an extremely dedicated and determined staff, allowed us to complete, with considerable improvisation, the final production steps for the 12 January issue. Our publication vendors, Cadmus Journal Services in Richmond, Virginia, and Brown Printing Company in Waseca, Minnesota, pulled out all the stops to overcome any weather-related delays in the production process. In the end, all domestic shipments were on time, with less than a 24-hour delay in shipments to Canada and Europe. It's a new era for both readers and editors. Come try us.

Floyd E. Bloom
Refining the On-Line Scholar’s Tools
Floyd E. Bloom

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