

CURRENT SCIENCE

Volume 61 Number 1

10 July 1991

EDITORIAL

During the past 18 months *Current Science* has undergone many changes. This transformation has been catalysed by a perception that there is a place in the Indian scientific scene for a widely read, multidisciplinary science journal which would publish not only the results of original research but also provide a forum for communication among the members of India's growing scientific community. It seems that these changes have generally been supported by our readership—but we are only too conscious that there is still much room for improvement.

The changes made in *Current Science* are designed fundamentally to alter the structure of the journal to enable it to compete in the modern scientific marketplace. The journal in its present garb is intended to be more readable by scientists working in different fields and also to provide a platform for the discussion of issues in science and the examination of science policies. For too long, the government's science policies have not been the subject of critical scrutiny by the scientific community. There exists no professional mechanism for the airing of ideas. It is this need that *Current Science* also hopes to fill in its general columns.

A multidisciplinary journal must cater to a wide audience. However, there is little doubt that in the recent past the pages of *Current Science* have been populated by articles mostly in one or two specific disciplines. A conscious effort is indeed being made to enhance the range and the quality of contributions in molecular biology, physics, astronomy, chemistry, geology and mathematics.

In consequence, the process of reviewing original papers in *Current Science* has been altered with the introduction of editorial screening before scrutiny by specialist referees. This procedure allows quick return of manuscripts that do not fulfil the criteria of specific importance, originality or general interest. This is to ensure quicker decision-making and is also intended to reduce the number of highly specialized papers reporting routine results in just a few fields.

Despite these measures to make *Current Science* popular and readable, its reputation must undoubtedly be determined by the quality of the original research papers carried by the journal. The scientific community generally clamours for the maintenance of a high quality in publishing papers. Unfortunately, in reality the pressure

from authors to publish indifferent papers is high.

Indian journals fight a losing battle to attract the best local research papers which often (and we are told justifiably) find their way to journals published abroad. Attempts to improve the quality, even by a few carefully chosen journals, are generally rendered difficult by the ambivalent attitude of the scientific community at large, and, more importantly, of the more visible leaders of scientific research in this country.

We hope to vigorously work towards making *Current Science* an attractive forum for reporting exciting new research results. To do this, the time gap between receipt and publication of an acceptable manuscript will be reduced by speeding up the process of refereeing and by ensuring that there are no delays in the dates of appearance of the journal. Ideally, we hope that the process of review can be completed within four weeks for Communications and publication within four weeks after acceptance. This, of course, demands that we set our house in order.

Meanwhile, this period of transition in *Current Science* has been characterized by the publication of several special issues which have focused attention on areas where there has been a major contribution by Indian scientists or on topics of general interest. The purpose of these issues has been to incorporate original papers of high quality and to invite the participation of a wide cross-section of established scientists across the world and also to draw attention to the journal itself.

Concerted attempts to improve the quality of review and general articles are also being made. Other strategies to enhance the readability of the journal include the publication of historical notes, book reviews, reports of S&T work in India, personal news, and, most importantly, research news and commentary. Since *Current Science* has a varied readership and many of our colleges and institutions do not have complete access to foreign journals, progress in science made anywhere in the world must be reported in its columns—and commentaries written on them.

In order to maintain the momentum of the past few months and to accelerate the process of change, a newly constituted Editorial Committee joins the journal with this issue which also is the first issue of the new volume. This group, we are sure, will interact with the scientific community in enhancing the quality of *Current Science*.