

DST questionnaire responses

In this, the last, instalment of comments from some respondents to the DST questionnaire (*Curr. Sci.*, 58, 948) on policy regarding publication of Indian editions of foreign S&T periodicals, the comments are categorized for convenience. As reported earlier (*Curr. Sci.*, 59, 8), the majority of respondents favoured publication of Indian editions. From analysis of 350 responses received until the publication of this result, 85% wanted Indian editions of magazines like *New Scientist* and *Scientific American*, 91% multidisciplinary journals like *Nature* and *Science*, and 75% various specific-area journals.

Some questionnaire!

It is difficult to say 'agree'/'not agree' to most of the questions of this questionnaire. The queries are not pointed but in the nature of elaborately worded statements with arguments etc. I suggest that, if an opinion poll is required, a redrafting of the questionnaire be made.

Y. V. G. S. Murti, *Physics Department, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras 600 036*

What policy?

I take it that the Indian editions would be published *without* any government subsidies. There would be no justification for providing subsidies from public funds. In this case, it seems to me that market factors would decide whether such Indian editions would appear at all. There does not seem to be much here for a major policy decision. If there is no visible market, the question of sanctioning Indian editions does not arise. If there is such a market, why prevent those interested from having ready access to these publications?

R. Narasimhan, *Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay 400 005*

Indian editions yes—general comments

... Publication of foreign journals in the country can be supported if that would increase the quality of Indian science, even if it is reported in foreign journals published in India. Ultimately our concern should be the quality of science in India, not of Indian scientific publications. Let us assume that by some trick we succeeded in getting top world scientists to publish in Indian journals. This need not make Indian science better. Anyway, publishing foreign journals in India helps to give information to more people in India.

E. D. Jemmis, *School of Chemistry, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad 500 134*

I believe that we have built up our own scientific and technical journals, like *Pramana* and others, to a world class level and a large part of Indian work is being published there. There would be no advantage therefore to let journals in the category described under II-3 [of the questionnaire: journals from societies etc.] (e.g. *Physical Review*) be published in Indian editions. On the other hand, journals in categories under II-2 [semi-popular, like *New Scientist*, *Scientific American*] and II-3 [multidisciplinary, like *Nature*, *Science*] have a wider audience and their availability in Indian editions would actually help to build up a reading public which would appreciate our own S&T journals (category II-3) more.

M. K. Mehta, *Vikram A. Sarabhai Community Science Centre, Ahmedabad 380 009*

I am assuming that the price level will be so kept that: (i) at least a reasonable fraction of the teaching/student community can be individual subscribers to popular science journals, and (ii) most of the universities will be able to subscribe to technical journals. My major reason for supporting this idea is a hope that our universities will be able to get direct access to research material of international standard.

T. Padmanabhan, *Astrophysics Group, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay 400 005*

1. Like in Indian industries, most Indian scientific/technical journals did not improve in quality. No more protectionism please.

2. Most PhD students in India (and there are lots of them) are not even aware of the latest topical burning issues and progress in theory and experiment, let alone have a deep understanding of them.

3. Journals like *Nature*, *New Scientist*, *American Journal of Physics*, *Scientific*

American, *Discover*, being broad-based, meet the above lacuna (provided students and teachers alike develop a taste for reading). No. 3 cited above provides a lot of stimulus to any committed teacher in high school/college/university.

P. V. Ramana Murthy, *Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay 400 005*

The popular scientific journals in India have failed to make their mark. Hence Indian editions of *Scientific American* etc. may be encouraged. Journals from learned societies of Indian origin are having a definite impact. Hence Indian editions of foreign journals need not be allowed. We can be selective.

S. Ranganathan, *Department of Metallurgy, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore 560 012*

... I do not think that any serious researcher is suffering for want of Indian editions of technical journals. The situation is somewhat different for the educated layman searching for a popular journal.

A. K. Raychaudhuri, *Presidency College, Calcutta 700 073*

Popular science journals pertain directly to society. Their standards are always relative to the society to which they are addressed. We should encourage our own popular science journals rather than proliferate *Scientific American* in India. However, the situation is very different in fundamental science and basic technology where standards of excellence are universal. Workers in smaller Indian institutions are suffering in not being able to subscribe to important journals. This should be alleviated.

Probir Roy, *Physics Department, University of Texas, USA (on sabbatical leave from TIFR, Bombay)*

The overall idea should be to make some journals (that give general commentaries on frontiers in science and updates on scientific news) available easily to students and scientists. If possible, a subsidized Indian edition of selected articles from *Nature* and *Science* (for example) may be published at a price affordable by graduate and postgraduate students and professionals.

Rakesh Tuli, *Molecular Biology and Agriculture Division, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Bombay 400 085*

Indian editions—specific comments

Perhaps only one or two of the most popular journals in each field should be selected, to ensure that the Indian publications are not lost in the avalanche.

A minor point, but is it possible to ensure that the advertising and classified sections of the local versions are not too different from the international editions?

Vivek Dhawan, *Raman Research Institute, Bangalore 560 080*

The market in India for specialized scientific journals is likely to be very small and so the publishers may not want to bring out Indian editions. However, if the publishers decide to use the Indian editions for all the subscribers in South-East Asia, eastern Europe (and perhaps Australia), then the effort of bringing out Indian editions will be worthwhile for them and I am sure that will result in reduced production costs and hence lower price and increased sales.

Gopal Prasad, *Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay 400 005*

... India should encourage being a host for the entire publication work to be carried out here (for the entire world) as this may be profitable for the publishers as well as to us. Publication groups with Indian collaborators may like to explore this possibility if our government encourages such activity.

Girjesh Govil, *Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay 400 005*

1. Indian editions of *British Medical Journal* (selections), *Journal of the American Medical Association* and *British Journal of Surgery* are being brought out.

2. All Indian editions of scientific and technical journals should have advertisements originating from India.

Sat Paul Goyal, *Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar 125 004*

I believe the following points must be considered before any decision is taken about bringing out Indian editions of foreign S&T periodicals.

1. The speed with which the Indian editions can be brought out: If these appear much later than the original periodicals, then it will be a setback to Indian science. In this context the efficiency of Indian publishers *vis-a-vis* that of foreign publishers must be considered. Many of the research labs which are currently getting foreign journals within 2–3 weeks after their publication may not be able to get the relevant scientific material in time if the government puts a ban on importing journals and if Indian editions appear much later.

2. If a particular publisher gets the monopoly of all the periodicals, then the entire scientific community will be at the mercy of the publisher with regard to costs, delays, quality of printing, etc.

R. V. Hosur, *Chemical Physics Group, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay 400 005*

... It is absolutely essential to have very strict quality control over the printing. No attempt should be made to have 'Indian insertions' in the Indian editions, as these would devalue all Indian contributions.

Ajit Kembhavi, *Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics, Pune 411 007*

While it is necessary to have Indian editions of important foreign journals published *synchronously*, we may explore getting print run-offs of the journals from the society/publisher/printer as that is said to involve [only] cost of paper plus small incidental expenses. A nominal royalty/fee should make this much cheaper for our country. It was done at one time for books in Latin America.

M. V. Nayudu, *Department of Virology, S. V. University, Tirupati 517 502*

I apprehend that foreign publishers, while negotiating, will demand that they be permitted to repatriate a large part

of their sale proceeds in foreign exchange to their own home organizations, or will introduce alternative terms into the contract guaranteeing such earning in their own currencies. This would be a crucial factor on the financial side of the proposal contained in this questionnaire. Since the total sale in India will be larger than the amount involved now in importing these publications for a limited clientele, the country may eventually end up spending more foreign exchange, of course in return for a wider use of these journals by our technical and scientific personnel. The gain in academic input may have to be balanced, under these circumstances, against the higher cost in foreign exchange.

M. K. Pal, *Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, Calcutta 700 064*

Many technical (by title) journals are geared towards aggressive advertisement of machinery and components. Such journals could encourage consumption of expensive machinery etc. for its own sake.

Thus, we need journals for widening our information base concerning technology and science, but not for widening our information base to buy a lot of machines.

S. N. Tandon, *Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay 400 005*

I assume your intention is to publish within India, *verbatim*, journals such as *Nature* and other first-rate journals in different fields, without eliminating sections such as 'News', 'News and views', 'Correspondence' and 'Product review', as well as the advertisements. I am wholly in favour of this. I do not think keeping them out has served to improve the quality or quantity of output of our laboratories. I do not see any way that it could be deleterious to the scientific publishing community within India. Since this step will not in any way affect our own journals, as several Indian scientists publish most or all of their work only in Indian journals (a situation which is not going to change unless we turn out better work), we should permit Indian editions of leading S&T journals without hesitation. This will also help to cut the rising prohibitive costs of [subscription to] most journals and will make it possible for more university libraries to subscribe to a wider range of journals.

Some suggestions:

1. In journals like *Nature*, the Indian

edition *should be made* to carry additional 'News' about scientific efforts in India.

2. Indian companies manufacturing products used by scientists *should not* be allowed to advertise in these Indian editions of foreign journals to ensure that these advertisements would contribute to the revenue of Indian journals.

3. Popular science journals should not be allowed to bring out Indian editions in order to allow the indigenous efforts to flourish unhindered.

S. Vijaya, *ASTRA Research Centre India, Bangalore 560 003*

Instead of Indian editions . . .

Indian editions of foreign journals would be welcome if they would cost only a fraction of their originals. But I do not see how they can be cost-effective if comparable technical standards have to be maintained, particularly when it is known that the bulk of the high-quality paper consumed is imported. The need of the hour is better utilization of the available resources in the major libraries of the country, either by the formation of a centralized journal service agency which would maintain an efficient data base of all the journals subscribed by every major library in the country and also would entertain requests for copies of specific articles from interested extra-local users or provide for membership to extra-local users in major libraries, without of course harming the interests of the local user groups.

G. Athithan, *Advanced Numeric Research and Analysis Group, Hyderabad 500 258*

Let us establish a central agency (say DST) to arrange to get important overseas journals in bulk by diplomatic courier service and distribute them to Indian organizations by courier service to avoid delay.

T. R. Anantharaman, *Thapar Corporate Research and Development Centre, Patiala 197 001*

Scientists in any given institution are likely to be interested in only a small fraction of the papers published in journals like *Physical Review*, *Journal of Solid State Chemistry*, etc. If each institution starts collecting all such journals, operations like providing storage space, maintenance of old copies, etc. will eventually become large and unproductive. I think that in each major city a central library should acquire all the

relevant scientific journals, which [should] remain unbound as individual issues, and facilities created for providing xerox copies of papers that individual institutions may require. Eventually these can be replaced by a central data base with terminals in the individual institutions. This choice would also give an impetus to the emerging electronics industry rather than to the stagnant printing industry, apart from saving precious wood.

N. V. Madhusudana, *Raman Research Institute, Bangalore 560 080*

1. I am of the view that five centres—East, West, South, North and Central—should be established in India, where almost all good foreign journals should be kept for consultation, instead of publishing in India (as Indian editions). From these five centres required articles should be made available for reference. These five centres will act as five zonal national libraries for science.

2. A national policy for promoting Indian journals should be made with the view to make our research of standard quality for national upliftment.

3. An exchange programme for [Indian] journals with foreign journals should be made.

R. B. Srivastava, *Department of Botany, M. S. College, Motihari 845 401*

Indian editions not desirable

1. Publication of foreign journals in Indian editions will have adverse effect on the sale of Indian journals as many libraries now subscribing to these journals may switch over to foreign journals.

2. The quality of reprinted photographs etc. is always poor.

3. Much other information, such as classified advertisements and latest information on modern equipment through foreign advertisements, is generally missing in Indian editions.

4. The only consideration for publishing Indian editions is the economic consideration, which could be offset by establishing an exchange of journals programme between libraries.

5. Publication of Indian journals should be encouraged and steps should be taken to create effective control on the standardization of publications.

K. R. Bhardwaj, *Division of Laboratory Animals, Central Drug Research Institute, Lucknow 226 001*

Most of the universities and institutions do get a lot of S&T journals both at higher and popular levels. If they cannot buy them, funds should be provided for doing so. If, on the other hand, the question is to take the latest S&T news to the common people (English-speaking), then public libraries should be provided adequate funds to buy such magazines as *New Scientist* and *Scientific American*. In my opinion it would be a drawback for Indian journals if we have Indian editions of foreign journals.

B. G. Ananda Rao, *Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad 380 009*

Indian journals

It is sad that even established scientists do not want to publish in Indian journals. This is not only a disincentive to younger workers but also definitely harmful to Indian journals. DST should make it a policy that at least half of the research work of Indian scientists is published in Indian journals.

K. D. Abhyankar, *Osmania University, Hyderabad 500 007*

There is need for 'birth control' and 'family planning' for Indian scientific journals, as for the general population. DST, UGC, CSIR, etc. should not recognize publications in most of the new journals. This would help in discouraging growth of third-rate journals which have been started for the sole purpose of meeting the stipulated requirement of publications for higher fellowship or promotions.

C. R. Bhatia, *Biology Group, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Bombay 400 085*

Due to the existing policy, many Indian journals have appeared on the scene. But there is little doubt that papers published in Indian journals are considered to be of lower standard than those published in foreign journals. In fact, if some interesting results are obtained, authors are always encouraged to publish them in foreign journals for wider circulation If any Indian journal cannot compete with its foreign counterpart, its publication serves no purpose. It is better that publication of such journals be stopped.

D. K. Chakrabarty, *Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad 380 009*

. . . As a reviewer of papers [for an Indian journal I have often] felt unhappy

[about] the standards. Even the editors are satisfied in many cases over sub-standard articles for the mere existence of the journal. They had to bypass my criticism in order to accept the papers....

B. S. V. Gopalan, Physics Department, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras 600 036

... Our own journals can be improved by using foreign members in the editorial boards, by combining journals (e.g. only one journal in chemistry), and by initially having a minimum of 25% foreign authorship in the articles.

P. T. Manoharan, Regional Sophisticated Instrumentation Centre, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras 600 036

To make Indian S&T journals more international it might be useful to request some well-known researchers in different areas of science to contribute review articles or original papers to our journals. The invitees should be preferably from other countries.

G. Marimuthu, Department of Animal Behaviour, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai 625 021

1. We can have journals of the style and status of *Nature* and *Science* only if our other journals reach international standards.

2. We must have a policy at some level which encourages publication of first-rate work in Indian journals; otherwise all other measures are of no significance.

Anurag Mehra, Department of Chemical Technology, University of Bombay, Bombay 400 019

Scientific publication activity has not matured in India partly because of the Indian scientists (me included!) who preferred to publish abroad. I think we, like the Japanese, ought to publish first in our own journals and then a polished version abroad. Unfortunately we do not have the advantage of Japanese, namely different language and script for science!

I think in certain selected fields we should start having international journals based in India and having global editors. Also in book publishing: TMH, Wiley, Prentice-Hall must market their books internationally if authored in India. Right now it is a pitiful state. Personally I would be happy to start an international journal in power and energy. Unfortunately, in engineering, our professional institutions have failed. They must reorganize to make publishing their prime goal and decouple it from holding exams!

M. A. Pai, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL 61801, USA

Some of the Indian scientific journals have already attained international status. When evaluating performance [of scientists] papers published in good Indian journals should be given due weightage.

Anil R. Sheth, Institute for Research in Reproduction, Bombay 400 012

1. We have to learn to face the fact that all attempts to increase the circulation of Indian journals outside India have failed.

2. What matters is the emergence of good science from India which is internationally recognized. When there is sufficient volume of first-rate science

flowing from India, automatically an Indian journal that puts it out will succeed.

B. V. Sreekantan, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay 400 085

The decision to get Indian editions of foreign journals published should be determined by pragmatic considerations of costs, availability of scientific materials to Indian scientists and circulation of their published work to international scientific readership. We must not ignore our own scientific journals but should strive harder to increase their international circulation by making suitable editorial policy changes.

R. K. Varma, Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad 380 009

Annual reviews

There is a general and urgent need for establishing annual reviews in the areas of biology, physics, chemistry, mathematics and technology. The review series in the identified subjects will have to be established either by the Indian Academy of Sciences with the assistance of DST or by the CSIR.

T. J. Pandian, School of Biological Sciences, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai 625 021

Erratum

The comment of A. R. Prasanna published in these columns (*Curr. Sci.*) 59, 130) contains an error. While Prasanna's comment was 'I do consider it a good idea to try and bring in competition....', the printed version is 'I do not consider...'. The error is regretted. —Ed.