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Unless authors become conscious of the responsibilities of owning authorship in scientific research, the malpractice of offering and accepting gift authorship is difficult to curtail. Ultimately it is the responsibility of researchers that they re-

frain from such practices and help create a healthier academic environment. It is worthwhile to mention here that many a time authors are unaware of such accepted norms for authoring publications. Efforts should be made to make the authors aware of the important fundamental issue of criteria for authorship, and for the purpose of dissemination of information.

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On shoulders of Giants!

All of Ann Körner's messages to young scientists are appropriate¹. However, readers of *Current Science* would find it of interest to know that that the modest statement 'If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of Giants' may not really belong in this essay.

John Gribbin² writes about an entirely different – and quite plausible – explanation for this statement. As is well known, Newton, one of the greatest scientists of all time, was a boor and egotistical in his private life. Thus, such a statement of humility would be unexpected from him. John Faulkner of the Lick Observatory, California has suggested that this famous statement be interpreted in the light of history – and in its complete form, with the preceding statements, rather than on its own. The entire paragraph which Newton wrote, in a letter to Robert Hooke was 'What Des-Cartes did was a good step. You have added much in several ways, and especially in taking ye colours of think plates into philosophical consideration. If I have seen farther, it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants'.

The background to this letter is the feud that existed between Newton and Hooke: Newton had failed to acknow-

ledge, in a paper on optics in 1671, Hooke's contributions to the subject. When Hooke objected to this, Newton took offence at the very suggestion that Hooke, who he did not hold in high regard, could claim priority to a scientific idea. Thus, in his letter, he suggested that even Hooke himself could not claim priority to the concept as it was Descartes who had done the work much earlier and all that Hooke was doing was not original but merely adding something extra to someone else's discovery. The final kick, though, is the word 'Giant', with a capital G. Faulkner suggests that the use of the capital G in his letter is intentional: Hooke was small in stature and a hunchback as well. By using the word Giant (and not giant!), Newton was delivering a message that not only was Hooke physically Lilliputian, but intellectually so as well. This explanation would perfectly fit into the known image of Newton as an acerbic individual.

Newton continued holding a grudge against Hooke all his life and this extended beyond Hooke's death. How nasty a piece of work was Newton? Suffice it to say that, after Hooke's death in 1703, Newton joined the Royal Society, London, an institution that he was not a part

of earlier, because the society had largely been set up by Hooke. During Newton's presidency of the Royal Society, in 1710, the quarters of the Society was shifted from Gresham College to Crane Court. Newton took personal interest to see that all the portraits of the past fellows be safely carried from the earlier office to the new one. Only one portrait was mysteriously lost during the transfer – that of Robert Hooke! No authentic portrait of Hooke exists today.

Thus, one of the most famous aphorisms in science – and the tagline of the google scholar – is probably a misattribution!

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