



TWENTY YEARS OF PHYSICS TODAY

TODAY

By H. WILLIAM KOCH

TWO PREVIOUS AIP directors—Henry A. Barton and Elmer Hutchisson—have reviewed the earlier years of *PHYSICS TODAY* in the preceding pages. As the fourth and present director, I find this commemorative issue an ideal opportunity to comment on the way I see the publication and its future.

PHYSICS TODAY is the news magazine of the physics community. Because it intends to respond to the news needs of an evolving community, the philosophy and format are evolving also. The magazine melds together the professional interests "of the mutually unacquainted specialists in all branches of physics," in Barton's words. It carries reports by outstanding specialists, but an increasing part of the text material is being prepared by the magazine staff. The material now includes briefer and perhaps more valuable statements of the latest advances in physics, news of societies and meetings, and descriptions of national and international events that directly influence "the advancement and diffusion of physics." *PHYSICS TODAY* has become a lively and interesting combination of a magazine with excellent review articles in physics that are

understandable to large numbers of physicists and a newsweekly-type magazine with news items and commentary directed towards its audience of physicists.

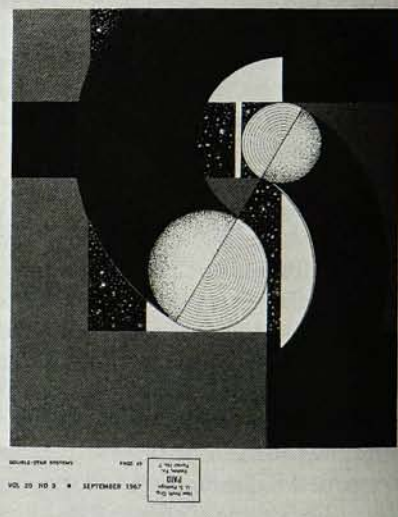
Evolutionary changes in content, size, and frequency of publication are being determined by the editor and his staff as influenced by the suggestions and "gentle persuasion" of the AIP governing board, officers of AIP member societies, society memberships and the director of the institute. I purposely use the words "gentle persuasion" because I feel the physics community wants a news magazine that, in a subtle sense, can serve as the factual reporter, the seer and, indeed, the conscience of that community. These wants require an editor who knows where to draw the line between the editorial freedom traditional to the news industry and the need to publish material specifically to meet requirements of the societies (or, conversely, not to publish when premature release would be detrimental).

I am delighted to express my feeling that the present editor has demonstrated that he is such an editor. He has been responsive to the changing demands of physics and the physics societies. He conducts monthly mail surveys to poll physicists for their reactions to *PHYSICS TODAY* content. He invites a "critic of the month" to evaluate constructively (and sometimes destructively) the philosophy and material contained in the magazine. The magazine staff and I participate in these evaluations. The evaluations regularly demonstrate the impossibility of satisfying all of the readership all the time, but the polls indicate a steadily increasing usefulness and popularity, demonstrating that the staff is doing its job successfully.

The editorial staff consists of ten full-time and part-time personnel. They include a PhD physicist, a former McGraw-Hill World News re-

porter back from an extended assignment in Germany, two professional physicists, and an artist-designer, in addition to the physicist editor. Although I assume the responsibilities of a publisher in coordinating the activities of the *PHYSICS TODAY* division and the advertising division of the American Institute of Physics, the unique relationship of the editor to the AIP Governing Board and me as the principal executive officer has obviated the desirability of labeling anyone as "publisher" of the magazine. The performance of the staff in collecting material from and about physicists has also obviated the need for an editorial advisory board which would ordinarily assist in soliciting and screening editorial material. However, the editor benefits from important advice pro-

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vided by an advisory committee on *PHYSICS TODAY* that reports to me, meets once or twice a year and receives monthly reports from the editor on what is happening at the *PHYSICS TODAY* office.

PHYSICS TODAY is the "house organ" of the physics community provided "on membership." It has become a unique and vital asset of that community because of an active editor supported by a competent staff, the availability of the resources of the AIP, and the traditions described by Henry A. Barton and Elmer Hutchisson. Tomorrow's *PHYSICS TODAY* must continue its present vitality and impact for physics. □



H. William Koch, present director of AIP, became "publisher" of *PHYSICS TODAY* when he moved from Washington with his wife, four sons and a daughter. In his earliest research he worked with Donald W. Kerst on betatrons at the University of Illinois. Later he had posts at Oak Ridge and the National Bureau of Standards.