

FROM THE EDITOR

In many ways, PHYSICS TODAY is a complex system. Like other such systems, it is subject to diverse stimuli and constraints, any of which could arise from within or be imposed from without. Like other complex systems, this magazine evolves continually in response to those various stimuli and constraints, and the rules that govern our evolution are often difficult to discern. Sometimes we evince dramatic changes; usually we do not. You will notice some changes this month.

Perhaps most immediately obvious are the cosmetic changes that we've made throughout our regular departments. The result is a bolder look that we think gives you better visual landmarks. We hope you like it as much as we do.

Far more important, this month we introduce a new department, "Issues and Events." It is a natural, evolutionary change that combines two previous departments, "Washington Reports" and "Physics Community." The melding of those departments recognizes that the geopolitical, social, and financial aspects of our science are all of great importance and are inextricably interwoven. "Issues and Events" appears immediately following "Search and Discovery" as an acknowledgment of the close coupling between the science we enjoy doing and the world in which we do it. As always, our coverage in "Issues and Events" reflects our belief that PHYSICS TODAY, as a monthly publication, best serves you by providing context for the news, not by trying to cover every breaking story. Within our pages, we strive to discuss things that really matter to you; and perhaps have a little fun along the way.

The ever-popular "We Hear That" department, covering people-related news such as society elections, awards, and job changes, can still be found near the back of the magazine. There since 1950, it provides striking testimony that some elements of complex systems are remarkably robust.

Drivers of change in complex systems take many forms. The explosive growth of the Internet is a driver familiar to us all. If you have not recently



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visited <http://www.physicstoday.org>, take a look. You will be surprised. Beginning with the July 2000 issue, the complete contents of PHYSICS TODAY are now available online. All the articles. Every book review and letter. All the news stories. Even new product announcements. Everything you find between our covers, you will find online.

On our Web site, we also routinely provide links to related material, both from our pages and beyond. For example, with our special issue on national security last month, we posted more than 160 pages of archival material from earlier issues of PHYSICS TODAY. When the right opportunities arise, we will also experiment with discussion forums as an additional service.

Our mission remains to keep you informed about science and its place in the world. Even as you depend on us for information, our success in providing it depends on you. Over the course of a year, we send thousands of e-mails and make thousands of calls to you, our readers. Whether we need to clarify a scientific matter, find a route through a tangled political thicket, learn about your field's (or someone else's) latest develop-

ments, or seek suggestions and advice on matters great and small, an enduring joy of our work is the wonderful spirit of cooperation we experience with you. For that, we are very grateful.

This year, we will call on some of you in a different way. One of our greatest challenges at PHYSICS TODAY is to understand what we don't already know, to push back the limits of our ignorance as you push forward the frontiers of our science. Ironically, one of the things we know the least about is you, and how well we are serving you. Beginning next month, we will be e-mailing an editorial survey questionnaire to random samples of you. We have put the same care into formulating our questions to you that we put into every issue of this magazine. We are eager to receive your answers. With that important stimulus, this complex system will continue to evolve in a manner appropriate to us all. ■

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