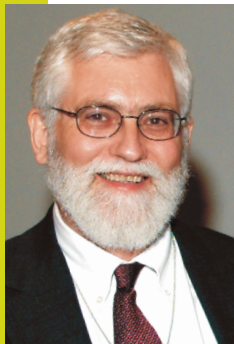


from the
editor



The march of change

Stephen G. Benka

“Everything flows, nothing stands still.” So goes the classical Greek proverb of Heraclitus, who also pointed out that one never steps into the same river twice. The notion of something with a fixed identity nevertheless experiencing continual change rings true in the physical world, where quantum fluctuations are always with us, where Earth’s plates constantly shift, and where the universe is ever-expanding. It rings just as true in the human world of nations and institutions and magazines and people, each evolving within its unique identity.

I discussed our changing community in my last editorial (PHYSICS TODAY, October 2005, page 10) and hinted at changes to come for this magazine. This June issue of PHYSICS TODAY takes a significant step along the road of evolution. We undertook much research, including several reader surveys over the past years in which we asked many detailed questions and received many well-considered answers and thoughtful suggestions. In addition, we have always listened carefully to you, whether on the phone, at conferences, in offices, or in letters and e-mail messages. Our research, followed by many discussions, long deliberation, and careful planning, has resulted in the redesigned publication before you.

Walking through the changes

Most obvious, our look has changed. Beginning with the cover, we have developed not just a new logo, but a new look and feel to the magazine; we hope you find, as we do, that the new fonts are more readable and the new layout more appealing. The various parts of the magazine are now color coded, as a navigation aid. For example, the Issues and Events news department (pages 23–29 this month) is thematically red and Books (pages 61–71) is orange.

Speaking of navigation, our logo now contains our online address, www.physicstoday.org, which highlights the important role that the internet plays today. Our evolving website holds far more than just the complete contents of PHYSICS TODAY, freely available to all individual recipients of the print magazine. Our homepage has daily updates of science-related News Picks from around the Web world; an Industrial Physics corner with current content of interest to the private sector; the Research Today tool, updated thrice daily, that provides free instant access to research papers as they are published in more than 100 journals and on the arXiv e-print server; historical selections from the archives of PHYSICS TODAY; and access points to the Career Network, Event Calendar, Buyers’ Guide, and community news including obituaries and, in a few more months, the new home of the We Hear That department. Deeper into the website, many individual items from the pages of PHYSICS TODAY provide access to additional material, such as links to further research, animations, sound clips, and even full tutorials.

The Physics Update selections have now moved from page 9, where they have resided for more than a decade, to

a new home at the end of the Search and Discovery department (pages 13–21 this month). Thus, all the current research news coverage is logically brought together in one place: In-depth stories of results deemed important by the community are followed by brief notices of research deemed interesting by our editors.

It is our conviction that you are, by nature, curious. A suggestion that we have heard repeatedly and that resonates strongly with us has been to introduce new topics in a broadly accessible manner. We have taken up the challenge and, with this issue, introduce two new departments.

The first, which we call Quick Study, is explicitly intended to provide tutorials in interesting areas that will be new to most readers. This month’s edition, on pages 82 and 83, deals with the texture of chocolate—a surprisingly rich subject. Quick Study will be found in front of the renamed Jobs and Opportunities classified ad section.

The second new department, called Back Scatter, will bring visual appeal to the final page just inside the back cover of the magazine. Our plan is to make it technically light yet plentiful in science. Each month, we will publish a particularly striking image—of virtually anything—and include just enough text to present the basic science being displayed. This month you will find an atmospheric phenomenon. We welcome image suggestions; see page 96 for how to send them to us.

In these days when communicating science is everyone’s job, we hope both of our new departments provide you some enjoyable, interesting, or even exciting fare to share with a hungry public. And of course to satisfy some of your own curiosity.

A singular celebration

We inaugurate these changes in conjunction with an important milestone. Beginning on page 30, this special issue celebrates the diamond anniversary of the American Institute of Physics, publisher of PHYSICS TODAY. When founded 75 years ago, AIP was an umbrella organization for its five member societies, comprising some 4000 individuals. Today, with 10 member societies serving 130 000 scientists in about 150 countries, AIP too has evolved. To learn more about its programs and services, see AIP’s annual report, which accompanies this issue of PHYSICS TODAY. And visit <http://www.aip.org/anniversary> to find out about the history of AIP and to view some of the festivities that celebrated its 75 years of service.

We will continue to ask for your input and listen carefully as we consider the ongoing evolution of PHYSICS TODAY. Formal reader surveys are exceedingly useful; should you receive one, please take the time to complete it thoughtfully. Well-considered suggestions, critiques, and other comments are always welcome and can be sent to ptchanges@aip.org.

We look forward to hearing from you. ■