

as a “learning lifeline” by the United Nations.³ The member societies of the American Institute of Physics should consider working with organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF to create additional learning lifelines.

Such initiatives would be consistent with 21st-century thinking surrounding equity, diversity, and inclusion—at large and in the sciences in particular. They would require concerted effort and patience, but they would be bound to succeed in the end. You cannot underestimate the resolve of younger generations to aspire to a better life for themselves and their families. In time, it will become clear to those who place barriers on education that their efforts are futile.

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The insufficient word in PHYSICS TODAY’s first issue

When PHYSICS TODAY debuted in May 1948, its first editor, David Katcher, wrote the following in an editorial introducing the magazine.

PHYSICS TODAY is for the physicist, to inform him in comfortable, everyday language, of what goes on and why and who goes where. But it is also for the chemist, the biologist, and the engineer, to tell them of the science towards which they are driven by so many of their investigations; it is for the student, the teacher, the lawyer, the doctor, and all who are curious about physics; it is for administrative officials who deal with research; it is for editors and writers whose profession puts them midway between what is done and how it should be reported; it is for you, whatever reason brought you to this page.

In his engaging article “PHYSICS TODAY turns 75,” (PHYSICS TODAY, May 2023, page 42) current editor-in-chief Richard Fitzgerald comments on that editorial, saying, “One part of Katcher’s description above is notably out of date, though. PHYSICS TODAY has evolved into more than a magazine and can be found well beyond the printed page. We have a website, email newsletters, social media, and webinars, and we’ll continue to seek out and engage with our audiences wherever they may be.”

I feel that Fitzgerald’s feature missed an important opportunity to discuss an even glaringly more out-of-date part of Katcher’s description, in the first sentence: the use of the pronoun “him”—which makes the introduction to both the magazine, and thus Fitzgerald’s article, explicitly gendered.

Given, as Fitzgerald puts it, that PHYSICS TODAY strives “to be a reminder of our



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PRECISION MEASUREMENT GRANTS

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) anticipates awarding two new Precision Measurement Grants that would start on 2024 October 1, contingent on the availability of funding. Each award would be up to \$50,000 per year with a performance period of up to three years. The awards will support research in the field of fundamental measurement or the determination of fundamental physical constants. The official Notice of Funding Opportunity, which includes the eligibility requirements, will be posted at www.Grants.gov.

Application deadline is tentatively **2024 February 2**
For details/unofficial updates see: physics.nist.gov/pmg.

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commonalities as scientists," the magazine's 75th anniversary presents an opportunity to reflect on the contributions that women have made during the lifetime of the publication and in the discipline it covers.

Perhaps a starting point could be to observe that the only mentions of "women" or "girls" in the article are literally in small print in two of the figures: the 1992 ad for Hubble Postdoctoral Fellowships and the word clouds.

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Expand STEM education for older adults

The US would greatly benefit from expanding educational opportunities in STEM (science, technology,

engineering, and mathematics) for people of age 60 and up. By 2060 about 30% of the US population will be above the age of 60—and the percentage of adults between 18 and 64 will have declined.¹ That raises questions about how society can sustain the workforce and current retirement systems. People of age 60 and up could be a resource, on either a paid or volunteer basis, that counterbalances the increasing shortage of younger people in the labor force. But to do that, we will need to place more emphasis on teaching and training for older adults.²

Older adults in the US who participate in formal educational offerings can choose from formats and programs at various types of places, including higher-education institutions, religious institutions, community organizations, nonprofit groups, and self-organized initiatives.

Studies have shown that learning at older ages has a positive impact on physical health, self-confidence, social inclusion, independence, and cognitive ability.³ In addition, STEM education could help older adults keep up to date with technological and scientific advancements. That is important not only because society needs older adults to continue participating in the workforce after retirement, but also because studies have shown that older adults score lower on science knowledge tests than younger generations. Meanwhile, science misinformation—and its potential to mislead voters—has only continued to spread. Given that older generations are more likely to vote, society would benefit from older generations having more STEM education.⁴

Policymakers and researchers need to pay more attention to the topic of participation, educational behaviors, and interests of older adults in education. The little existing research indicates that multiple factors, such as social class and gender, affect the likelihood of whether adults take part in lifelong learning in older age. Initial studies suggest that older adults participating in education tend to be white people with financial security.⁵ It is important to expand opportunities for population groups that are underrepresented for reasons beyond the individuals' control.

Recently we conducted a dedicated interdisciplinary workshop on STEM education for ages 60 and up. The event

brought together experts and decision-makers from different disciplines (<https://indico.phys.hawaii.edu/e/stem60plus>). Based on the discussions, we suggest the following action items:

- Increase research efforts focused on implementing lifelong STEM education effectively and develop tailored programs for different population groups.
- Expand STEM education programs for older generations.
- Make lifelong-learning opportunities widely accessible, especially to groups with low prior educational attainment.

The member societies of the American Institute of Physics can play a crucial role in facilitating discussion with politicians and the other STEM disciplines about investing resources into educating older adults.

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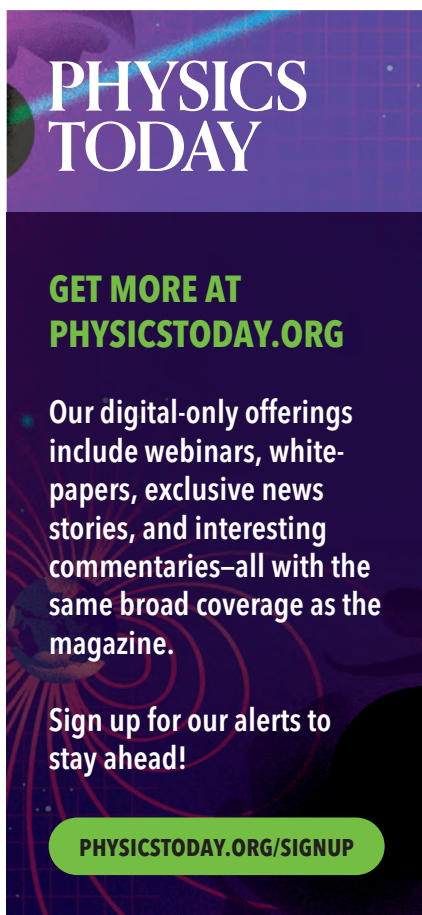
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Correction

September 2023, page 20—The original story misstated the name of cryogen-free instrument manufacturer Bluefors. **PT**



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