

The march of change

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I've been at PHYSICS TODAY for 25 1/2 years. When I joined the staff, the PHYSICS TODAY website—indeed, the Web as we know it today—was in its infancy. Google was newly incorporated. Webpages were static. “Physics Today” meant PHYSICS TODAY the magazine, its sole incarnation.

The world of publishing has changed radically since then. Many of us are omnivorous consumers of content, and content can now be found in vastly more places—and in vastly more forms. PHYSICS TODAY has certainly evolved, too, especially in the digital space, with online-only content, webinars, and more.

The mission of PHYSICS TODAY, though, remains the same: to be a unifying influence across the many subdisciplines in the physical sciences. If you receive the magazine, chances are you belong to at least one of the 10 professional societies that are part of the American Institute of Physics federation. Those societies span a rich variety of fields: physics, astronomy, optics, medical physics, acoustics, meteorology, and more. Our challenge is to provide diverse content that is informative and engaging to most people across most fields most of the time. Only by doing that can we live up to our mission to be a unifying influence.

Last year marked PHYSICS TODAY's 75th anniversary. That milestone prompted not only a look back at where we came from but also a look forward to where we are going. Audience feedback and much deep introspection have led us to evolve how we approach our mission and, in particular, how we can better satisfy your curiosity and better cover the breadth and richness of the physical-sciences enterprise. Some of the resulting changes are already showing.

As I wrote in last December's issue, obituaries are now only online, where they are available in a single, readily findable place. Many individuals' contributions and life stories certainly have been worthy of a place in our pages, but with our capacity to run only a small number of obituaries each month, the decision of who received one of those places became increasingly difficult to make in an equitable way. Our website provides a better, fairer option for honoring community members no longer with us, and anyone is welcome to submit a remem-



brance online. Our books department, too, has been unable to keep pace with the many noteworthy books being published—at least in a way that adequately captures the ever-increasing range of subjects they cover. We've thus made the difficult decision to discontinue our books department after this issue.

Those changes, however, enable us to meet what is by far the most common request we've received from reader surveys: providing more coverage about advances in fields outside one's own—that is, across the full gamut of research areas. After all, part of what unites us as a community is our curiosity and sense of wonder. So starting this month (page 17), in each issue of the magazine we are including highlights of the short research news updates, selected by our editors, that we have recently published online. They'll run in the back of the Search and Discovery department, where they will follow stories of research advances deemed by subject-matter experts as significant enough to warrant more in-depth coverage. By serving up a broader collection of what's important and what's interesting, we hope that you'll regularly find items that you find informative and that you can share with others, be they scientists, science enthusiasts, policymakers, or members of the public.

Another integral part of what unites us is our shared experience of being a scientist and of being co-inheritors of a rich, fascinating scientific heritage. Over the course of 2024, you'll start seeing more reporting not just of new science but also of scientists. Science doesn't progress in a vacuum; it can't—and shouldn't—be separated from the people who conduct it. Other changes are also in the works for this year.

The forefront of science is continually advancing; PHYSICS TODAY will be too. We always welcome your input and feedback, whether on reader surveys, at conferences, or sent to us at pteditors@aip.org or on our website, www.physicstoday.org. 