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Editorial

LAUNCHING A NEW JOURNAL

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One day, a new theory will revolutionize physics, yielding novel insights into the nature of reality alongside with surprising experimental predictions, just as relativity and quantum mechanics did. What will be the basic principles of this theory is anybody's guess, but John Archibald Wheeler [1] has vividly captured its most fundamental feature:

> Surely someday, we can believe, we will grasp the central idea of it all as so simple, so beautiful, so compelling that we will say to each other, "Oh, how could it have been otherwise! How could we have been so blind so long!" (p. 28)

Greenberger [2], however, has much more sobering reflections:

> Most physicists believe that had they been around at the birth of relativity, they would have been able to instantly appreciate its radical elements. But my own experience indicates that if Einstein were to send his paper to *Physical Review* today it would have almost no chance at all of being published. "Highly speculative!" would be the referee

> report, a death shell to any paper. He would have to append it to an article on string theory, or some other fad, and hope it wasn't noticed (p. 558).

Is it conceivable that a major scientific breakthrough would be denied access to the scientific press? To most readers, this question is naïve: Not only a scientific breakthrough, they would point out, but even just a good piece of scientific work, conceived within the mainstream, can be rejected by any journal. Juan Miguel Campanario, a physicist from the University of Alcalá, Spain, has published several studies with intriguing (or infuriating) titles such as "Consolation for the scientist: Sometimes it is hard to publish papers that are later highly cited" [3] and "Have referees rejected some of the most-cited papers of all times?" [4] (See http://www2.uah.es/jmc/papers2.html#scico for downloadable articles). Indeed, it seems that a considerable amount of scientific research never gets published where it deserves to be.

One might downplay this concern by pointing out the communication revolution brought about by the Internet. Numerous scientific and non-scientific groups conduct lively discussions nowadays on the net, where countless fresh and half-baked ideas get first hearing. Recall, for example, the role professional e-mail discussion groups played in the final development of Andrew Wiles' famous proof [5]. How many genuine innovations sprout in cyberspace, later to mature into fully-fledged scientific works? Here a gold mine awaits any historian or philosopher of science who will take up the mission of revisiting Kuhn's [6] work on paradigm shifts in the light of the Internet.

So, our proverbial new Einstein needs not discard his or her paper having been rejected by *Physical Review* or *Nature*. Rather, he or she can put the paper somewhere on the web in the hope that, just by virtue of the work's novelty, mathematical rigor and predictive power it will sooner or later catch the scientific community's attention. But then, what is the chance of an article posted this way to ever be noticed amidst the enormous surrounding noise? After all, crackpots far outnumber genuine revolutionaries, and much of the material published privately on the web is sheer nonsense. The journal editor, who off-hand rejects several articles by exerting initial judgment, is doing an essential

service to the scientific community, even at the risk that, every once in a while, a piece of real genius will end up in the waste basket.

The electronic journal proposes a creative solution to this dilemma. On the one hand, its peer reviewing can be as rigorous as that of a paper journal. On the other hand, because there is no pages charge, it can allocate a section for those authors who believe that their results are so important that they give up peer reviewing with all its inherent benefits. Thus, their paper will not count as an ordinary scientific publication but still may be read by the readers of the ordinary articles. To this advantage of the online journal one should add the incredible speed and ease of the entire publication process. Articles' submission, multiple reviewing, the ensuing correspondence, and, if everything goes well, the revisions and proof reading – all become very rapid without loosing any bit of rigor and efficiency. Last but not least – the journal can be free, accessible to everyone at home!

EJMAPS offers all these advantages as well as many others. Its scope is enormous, encompassing as a wide variety of disciplines as that of *Physical Review* A to E (eventually, as EJMAPS grows, it too will hopefully branch into several special series). Alongside with the main forums, namely, the research articles, short notes, book reviews, etc., published in the journal itself, there are several e-mail lists for discussions between the readers and for communication between readers and the journal. In this respect EJMAPS is like a stimulating ongoing seminar, a nice place to hang around.

Of course, this is still a newborn project, its realization depending not only on the editorial board but also on the readers, who are kindly invited to consider the journal for their next publications and to take active part in its future formation. So, if the progress of your field is dear to you, if you have a passion for truth (sorry for being politically incorrect – I do believe there is such a thing), and – let's be frank – if you too have a thrill every time a good work of yours comes out of press – welcome aboard!

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