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What Is Bioscience?

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Source: BioScience, 55(8) : 643

Published By: American Institute of Biological Sciences

URL: https://doi.org/10.1641/0006-3568(2005)055[0643:WIB]2.0.CO;2

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BioScience (ISSN 0006-3568) is published monthly by the American Institute of Biological Sciences. To subscribe, call 1-800-992-2427, ext. 29. Individual membership: sustaining, $90/yr; individual, $70/yr; family, $90/yr (includes $36 for *BioScience*); emeritus, $50/yr; K–12 institution (teacher/administrator), $60/yr (includes $22 for *BioScience*); graduate and postdoctoral students, $40/yr (includes $21 for *BioScience*); undergraduate and K–12 students, $20/yr (includes $15 for *BioScience*); lifetime, $1400 (one-time fee). Institutional subscriptions: domestic, $315/yr; foreign, $378/yr. Single copies: $14 plus shipping and handling for up to 20 copies; volume discounts available for more than 20 (call 1-800-992-2427, ext. 29). Subscription renewal month is shown in the four-digit year–month code in the upper right corner of the mailing label.

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BioScience
American Institute of Biological Sciences

What Is Bioscience?

Credible answers to the question posed above—which refers to a term of art, not this journal—are varied and becoming more so. We declare an interest. New techniques and concepts continue to expand the scope of investigations aimed at enhancing understanding of biological systems. But can *BioScience* (the journal) be all things to all readers?

When this publication adopted its name in January 1964—it had for the previous 13 years been published bimonthly as the *AIBS bulletin*—the term "bioscience" was little used. The then president of the American Institute of Biological Sciences, plant physiologist Paul J. Kramer, wrote that the institute sought members from "every area of biology, from the classical and the new, the basic and the applied, and even from friends of biology." Yet the articles in that first issue of *BioScience*—René Dubos on strengthening environmental biology, C. Earle Smith Jr. on the poor state of plant taxonomy, and Frank W. Woods on the conflict between foresters and "native-area preservationists"—foreshadowed a general direction, if not a path, that the journal has often followed since.

We publish overviews rather than detailed primary reports, and our articles typically examine the broader context of biology as well as mechanistic insights. We have published more work focusing above the level of the cell than on subcellular biology, and a good deal on the environment and natural resources. Yet the overview article in this issue by Nigel Yarlett and Johannes H. P. Hackstein, which discusses the origin of hydrogenosomes (see p. 657), as well as that by Kan Nobuta and Blake C. Meyers on models for genomic research into plant disease (see p. 679), shows that *BioScience* is not wedded to biology above the cellular level. Both articles, and others in this issue, illustrate how subcellular techniques are shedding fascinating light on phenomena of wide biological interest.

More than 40 years after adopting our name, we still aspire to publish articles of interest to a broad range of biologists, and we are particularly keen on publishing more on evolutionary biology and what is now called integrative biology. General usage of the term "bioscience" has, however, changed appreciably since 1964. Today it often connotes a biomedical focus (as it does to a large extent in the journal *Frontiers in BioScience,* for example). The *BioScience* you are reading, in contrast, mostly eschews medicine.

The vagueness and unwieldiness of the term "bioscience" as it is commonly used today have persuaded us of the need to devise a tagline—a few words of description—that we will use on this page in the journal, on our Web site, and elsewhere to clarify for readers, librarians, and potential authors what sort of biology articles they can expect to find in the pages of *BioScience.* We cover a lot of biology, but not all of it. Friends of the publication have already contributed dozens of suggestions. A sampling: "Exploring advances in understanding the biosphere"; "Integrating the life sciences from molecule to ecosystem"; "Environmental, organismal, and integrative biology"; "Sustaining the future through biological knowledge"; "Deciphering complex biological systems." It seemed only fair to allow readers to throw in their two cents' worth. Suggestions are welcome at tbeardsley@aibs.org. The editor's decision is, as they say, final.

TIMOTHY M. BEARDSLEY
Editor in Chief

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