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The Ideal Article for BioScience

Author: Beardsley, Timothy M.

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BioScience®
Organisms from Molecules to the Environment
American Institute of Biological Sciences

The Ideal Article for *BioScience*

It seems worthwhile occasionally to redescribe for the benefit of readers and potential authors the sort of articles that we hope to publish in *BioScience*, and how this aspiration relates to AIBS's broader mission to advance biological research and education for the welfare of society.

Certainly, as *BioScience*'s tag line, "Organisms from Molecules to the Environment," indicates, the subfield of biology that is relevant to a *BioScience* article can vary over a very broad range. So an Overview that has something to say about molecular evolution might be as welcome as one that treats river evolution. Moreover, we see a particular role for *BioScience* in publishing articles that span disciplinary boundaries, since AIBS has long supported efforts to bring biologists together. Yet this catholic attitude, which reflects the diverse interests of AIBS members, member societies, and organizations, does not mean that *BioScience* can or should publish any specialized article that might alternatively have appeared in a journal of one of the AIBS member organizations. We take seriously—and ask our reviewers and authors to take seriously—our objective of communicating with a broad readership. That means, in part, paying attention to clarity (dare we say elegance?) of expression, with an active consideration for the nonspecialist reader. We therefore strive to eliminate jargon and insist on defining terms that people reading outside their own fields might not know. We are not sticklers for formality for its own sake, but effective explanation of sometimes-difficult ideas usually demands a levelheadedness and consistent attention to detail that come only from careful revision.

Clarity is not enough, however. Authors of *BioScience* articles ought to want to say something to biologists that they believe will help the whole discipline, not just their part of it. As we say in our *Information for Contributors*, we "give priority to articles that explain connections between disciplines or synthesize conclusions of general interest to biologists." Some of these connections and conclusions might be about biology per se; others, however, might be about approaches to the teaching of biology, good professional practices, the effective use of new tools, or explorations of little-known history. Any of these may be ideal for *BioScience*.

Often, our articles represent attempts to ensure that insights from biology inform decisionmaking in government and other institutions. Since all biologists would presumably like to see their subject be influential, good models of such attempts to extend biology's influence should be of general interest. *BioScience* has often published special sections that address specific biological topics in depth, many of them topics with significant practical implications. We intend to continue doing so. AIBS hopes thereby to benefit its member societies who want to publish up-to-date treatments of progress in their areas, even documents such as white papers, that are expressly designed for a broad readership and to help in outreach efforts. Doing excellent biology is only half the battle: Its effective communication to the world at large is just as much a challenge. *BioScience* will continue to support this ideal for the benefit of individual AIBS members, member societies, and the discipline.

TIMOTHY M. BEARDSLEY
Editor in Chief

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