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SEMIANNUAL INDEX  
NEWS OF THE YEAR

# SCIENCE NEWS

THE WEEKLY NEWS MAGAZINE OF SCIENCE



# SCIENCE NEWS

DECEMBER 21 & 28, 2002 VOL. 162, NOS. 25 & 26

## Features

### 392 Drama in Numbers

Putting a passion for mathematics on stage  
by Ivars Peterson

### 394 Getting Warped

A new exhibit on Albert Einstein dissects his slippery science  
by Peter Weiss

### 397 Cold Comfort

A futuristic play of cryogenic proportions  
by Bruce Bower



## This Week

### 387 Skull may complicate human-origins debate

by Bruce Bower

### 387 Microbes turn up deep in Antarctic lake ice

by Carol Marzuola

### 388 Raiding ant swarms with few rules avoid gridlock

by Susan Milius

### 388 Scientists design gold nanoparticle films

by Jessica Gorman

### 389 Imaging of nerve cell branches stirs debate

by John Travis

### 389 Despite cleaner cruises, diarrhea outbreaks persist

by Ben Harder

### 390 Findings from the cosmic microwave background

by Ron Cowen

**THIS WEEK ONLINE**  
[www.sciencenews.org](http://www.sciencenews.org)

**Lacing up shoes** How to lace like an ace. See Ivars Peterson's MathTrek.

## Of Note

### 399 New fossil weighs in on primate origins

Herpes vaccine progresses

Prying apart antimatter

Ethiopians reveal high-altitude twist

## Meetings

### 400 Fresh crater found on lunar images

Warm arctic summer melted much ice

Contrails forecast on the horizon

Toppling icebergs sped breakup of Larsen B ice shelf

## Departments

### 401 Books

### 401 Letters

### 402 Science News of the Year

### 411 Semiannual Index

**Cover** With sprightly wit, several recent dramas have delved into the world of mathematicians and their abstruse concerns. (Dean MacAdam) **Page 392**

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# SCIENCE NEWS

## This Week

### Chinese Roots

#### Skull may complicate human-origins debate

In 1958, farm workers digging in a cave in southern China's Liujiang County discovered several human bones including a skull. Relying on its resemblance to securely dated human fossils in Japan, scientists assigned this *Homo sapiens* skull an age of 20,000 to 30,000 years.

However, the Liujiang finds may be much older than that, according to a report in the December *Journal of Human Evolution*.

The fossils probably came from sediment dating to 111,000 to 139,000 years ago, says a team led by geologist Guanjun Shen of Nanjing (China) Normal University. He and his coworkers add that it's still possible that the Liujiang discoveries came either from a cave deposit dating from

around 68,000 years ago or from one dating to more than 153,000 years ago.

If any of these estimates pans out, "the Liujiang [specimen] is revealed as one of the earliest modern humans in East Asia," the team concludes. The presence of modern humans in this part of the world 100,000 years ago or more would roughly coincide with their earliest fossil dates in Africa and the Middle East.

Evidence of such ancient roots for *H. sapiens* in China creates problems for the influential out-of-Africa theory of human evolution, Shen's group says. That theory holds that modern humanity originated in Africa between 100,000 and 200,000 years ago and then spread elsewhere, replacing other *Homo* species. If the Liujiang dates were confirmed, out-of-Africa adherents would need to find older African *H. sapiens* fossils than they now have or show that modern humans migrated extremely quickly from Africa to eastern Asia.

The new dates also suggest that other, more-primitive-looking Chinese *Homo* fossils that date to 150,000 to 100,000 years ago represent a lineage that coexisted with modern humans, Shen proposes.

Scientific accounts from 1959 and 1965 of the Liujiang discoveries guided the new determination of the fossils' likely burial site. Shen's team mapped various soil deposits in the cave and calculated the age of crystallized limestone samples by using the rate of uranium decay.

Uranium analyses at other sites support an ancient origin of modern humans in southern China, Shen says. *H. sapiens* teeth found at two other caves in this region come

from sediment that his group dates to at least 94,000 years ago.

Anthropologists with divergent views about human evolution say that the new age estimate for the Liujiang skull remains preliminary. It's still uncertain how the skull got in the cave and where it was originally buried, remarks Christopher B. Stringer of the Natural History Museum in London. Stringer, an out-of-Africa proponent, says that Shen's team members need to date either the skull itself or the calcite clinging to its surface to make their case.

Milford H. Wolpoff of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor agrees. "I'd love for the Liujiang skull to be as old as Shen proposes, but we'll never know for sure without directly dating the specimen," Wolpoff holds. In his view, modern humanity evolved simultaneously in Africa, Asia, and Europe over the past 2 million years.

Shen says he hopes to work out an agreement with Chinese officials in charge of the Liujiang skull to date the specimen directly. —B. BOWER

### Life at the Frigid Edge

#### Microbes turn up deep in Antarctic lake ice

A pocket of cold, concentrated saltwater at the bottom of Antarctica's Lake Vida has been sealed off from the world for at least 2,800 years. Yet it could still harbor life, say researchers who found microbes in the ice right above the briny layer.

Peter T. Doran of the University of Illinois in Chicago and his team started studying the frozen 5-kilometer-long lake after learning that it contains liquid.

Previously, researchers thought that Lake Vida—one of the largest lakes in the McMurdo Dry Valleys desert—was just a "big chunk of ice," says Doran. However, in 1995 ice-penetrating radar revealed saltwater 19 meters down. "This brine pocket in the center of the lake popped up like a sore thumb," says Doran.

The next year, Doran and his colleagues returned to Lake Vida to obtain cores as deep as 15.8 m. However, fearing that they might contaminate the buried pocket of liquid with contemporary microbes, they stopped their drilling short of it.

Instead, the researchers sampled the top of an overlying 3-m-thick layer of slushy saltwater. They also left probes at the bottom of the boreholes to monitor the temperature there for 4 years. The water is so salty—seven times the salt concentration of seawater—that it can remain liquid even at  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

Lake Vida differs from other nearby, perennially ice-covered lakes. In those bod-



**ASIAN CONNECTION** If southern China's Liujiang skull is really more than 100,000 years old, this modern *Homo sapiens* fossil will shake up theories of human evolution.

# SCIENCE NEWS

## This Week

ies, meltwater enters by flowing under a 3- to 6-m ice cover. In contrast, meltwater and sediments carrying microorganisms don't enter Lake Vida but instead freeze on top of it in a bubble-pocked layer thick enough to block sunlight from reaching the bottom. The resulting 19-m cover—the thickest lake ice ever recorded—is an “ice museum” recording biological history, says John C. Priscu of Montana State University–Bozeman.

The researchers were surprised to discover that 12-m-deep ice samples dated to 2,800 years ago contained viable microbial life. Some icebound microbes, such as cyanobacteria, became active and grew when the researchers thawed them.

The scientists, who report their findings in an upcoming *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, plan to sample Lake Vida's brine in a few years. A similar challenge also faces scientists pining to sample Antarctica's Lake Vostok, which receives meltwater from the 4-km-thick glacier that covers it (*SN*: 10/2/99, p. 216).

Charles R. Bentley of the University of Wisconsin–Madison is eager to learn more about life in such an extreme environment. “The idea that the lake water has been isolated for at least 2,800 years is fascinating,” he says.

Lake Vida is unique, agrees Diane M. McKnight of the University of Colorado in Boulder. It's the first example of an ice-sealed lake that has no contact with overlying glacial ice, new meltwater, or the atmosphere.

Priscu says that finding viable life in seemingly inhospitable places, such as deep in Lake Vida's ice, supports his view that Earth's

biosphere is much larger than previously imagined. “The microbial world has few limits on our planet,” he says. —C. MARZUOLA

## Ant Traffic Flow

### Raiding swarms with few rules avoid gridlock

**A novel analysis shows how individual ants' behavior keeps the traffic flowing as 200,000 virtually blind army ants use a single trail to swarm out to a raid and return home with the booty.**

The South American army ant *Eciton burchelli* avoids epic gridlock by forming traffic lanes on its trail, explains Iain D. Couzin of Princeton University. The ants don't follow people's simple stay-to-the-right (or left) paradigm. Instead, they create three lanes—the outer two carrying raiders to the job and the middle one returning them to the nest. This pattern can develop from just the basic behavioral tendencies of individual ants, say Couzin and Nigel Franks of the University of Bristol in England in an upcoming *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B*.

This work is the first to examine individual ants' traffic rules, Couzin says. He finds that the system is innately different from the human-traffic patterns that he has modeled. The crucial difference: “Ants are not selfish,” he says.

Couzin began his army ant analysis by formulating a mathematical model to describe an individual rushing along a chemically marked trail until it detects a possible obstacle and chooses whether to turn aside. Next, he tuned the model by observing the behavior of real raiders.

In the jungle at Soberania National Park at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama, Couzin and Franks filmed

ant raids. During its 10-hour workday, an ant colony flows across the forest floor catching some 3,000 invertebrates each hour. The swarms flow so densely that the ants' feet make an audible rustle, Couzin says. “I think it's one of the wonders of the natural world,” he says.

Plugging measurements of ant movement into the computer model, the researchers found that ants have optimized their tendency to turn aside when encountering a possible obstacle, such as another ant. More sensitivity to collisions would have made the ants cringe and defer so much that they'd never get anywhere, but too little sensitivity would have created hundred-ant pileups.

The scientists also discovered that army ants carrying home their prey don't turn aside as much as ants on the way to work do. The computer model showed that this factor could enable ants to initiate a return lane by pushing into and deflecting the arriving ants.

The ants' three-lane system probably works better for them than a two-lane system would, speculates Couzin. A two-lane system would require a tendency to turn one way more often than another, he says. Such a bias could easily have undesirable effects, such as reducing the raiding party's tendency to forage in certain directions from its nest.

Another ant biologist, Neil Tsutsui of the University of California, Davis, speculates that a three-lane trail provides better defense for the booty lane than two lanes would. Tsutsui praises Couzin and Franks for their “unique and valuable” insights in showing how simple individual behavior can add up to a complex pattern for a whole group. —S. MILIUS

## Gold Deposits

### Scientists design nanoparticle films

**In a step toward a cheaper, easier way to connect computer chips to computers, scientists have patterned semiconductors with a film of extremely small gold particles. The nanoscale detailing might also lead to other applications: new sensors for detecting chemical weapons, novel chemical catalysts, and better ways of delivering medicines.**

The contacts that connect tiny components of a computer chip to a much larger wire are often made of gold because it doesn't react with air easily. The metal is expensive, however.

In the new work, Jillian Buriak, Lon Porter Jr., and their colleagues at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., use gold leftovers from coin-making factories. This so-called gold salt is inexpensive and can be converted into relatively pure gold particles, says Buriak.



**SEALED BY ICE** Supersalty water that lies at the bottom of Lake Vida may support life.



In simple bench-top experiments, the researchers dipped pieces of semiconductor materials, such as germanium or gallium arsenide, into a solution containing gold salt. A gold layer spontaneously formed on the semiconductors' surfaces. "You take a test tube [of gold salt] that's worth pennies, and you're able to get a very high-purity gold layer on top of your chip," says Porter.

Scanning electron microscopy and atomic force microscopy revealed that the film is actually made of nanoscale gold particles. The same process worked for palladium and platinum, precious metals well known for catalyzing chemical reactions.

Simply forming nanoparticle films is just a start. To move toward practical applications, the researchers used several chip-patterning techniques to deposit the nanoparticle films as lines or grids. The team also learned to control the size of the films' particles—from about 10 nanometers to 1 micrometer—by adjusting the temperature, deposition times, and gold-salt concentrations, says Porter, who with his coworkers reports the work in the Dec. 11 *Nano Letters*.

This work is "a very good example . . . of a generalizable method to fabricate nanoscale structures," comments Jie Liu of Duke University in Durham, N.C.

The scientists also bonded a dense layer of organic molecules to the large surface area created by the films' nanostructure, says Buriak. Researchers might be able to tailor such a top layer to detect certain molecules—say, those of a chemical warfare agent—to create a portable chemical sensor the size of a PalmPilot, adds Porter.

The new precious-metal films might also find use as catalysts since their nooks and crannies could promote chemical reactions, Porter suggests. Or, the small pockets could hold molecules for drug delivery. —J. GORMAN

## Showing Some Spine

### Imaging of nerve cell branches stirs debate

**Two research groups have taken unprecedented, high-resolution images of nerve cells inside the brains of live mice—and come to seemingly contradictory views. Resolving their conflict about the stability of cell projections called dendritic spines could illuminate how the adult brain adapts to experience and stores information, say neuroscientists.**

The research teams, which both report their work in the Dec. 19/26 *Nature*, studied different areas of the mouse cortex, the brain's outer layer. The group led by Karel



**TWIGGING OUT** This series of images from the brain of a live mouse provides evidence for a brief lifespan of many spines—the stubby bulges (distinguished by colored arrowheads) from nerve cell branches known as dendrites.

Svoboda, a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator at Cold Spring Harbor (N.Y.) Laboratory, examined a cortical region that processes sensory information from a mouse's whiskers. The team led by Wen-Biao Gan of New York University School of Medicine investigated cortical cells that respond to visual information.

Both groups worked with mice genetically engineered to incorporate fluorescent proteins into the targeted nerve cells. Svoboda and his colleagues studied the green-glowing cells of their mice by implanting viewing windows in the rodents' skull. Gan's team instead thinned the skulls of their mice until they could image the nerve cells that glowed yellow.

Rafael Yuste of Columbia University, coauthor of a manual on imaging nerve cells, calls the experiments a "tour de force" that will set the stage for many similar studies in live animals.

Over days, weeks, and even months, the neuroscientists recorded images of the same rodent brains, focusing on the nerve cell branches known as dendrites. In particular, the groups studied each dendrite's many stubby projections, or spines. Nerve cells communicate with each other through specialized junctions called synapses, and a dendritic spine provides the receiving end of a synapse, according to many neuroscientists.

In studies of 1-to-2-month-old mice, Svoboda and his colleagues found that although the dendrites of the mouse cortex remain stable, many of their spines quickly appear and vanish. The investigators report that about 50 percent of spines persist for more than a month, but the rest show up for only a few days or less. Trimming the whiskers of a mouse increases the percentage of spines that exist only briefly.

Svoboda's team considers its data as evidence for a dynamic adult brain in which synapse-based circuits are constantly remodeled by the formation and elimination of dendritic spines, especially in response to new experiences.

Yuste, however, cautions that not every spine contains a synapse, and synapses don't have to be on spines.

Gan's group envisions a more stable adult brain. Even in their 1-month-old mice, more than 70 percent of dendritic spines persisted for more than a month. And in mice

4 to 10 months old, around 96 percent of spines were stable for at least a month, many of them enduring much longer.

Some spines "can even be maintained over the lifetime of an animal," says Gan's colleague Jaime Grutzendler. The researchers suggest that such long-term spines may offer a way for the brain to store information such as memories.

Grutzendler questions whether Svoboda's team was really studying the adult brain because that group's mice were all young. The different brain regions examined may also partly account for the two groups' clashing data, he adds.

"The two papers are showing opposite results, something that doesn't happen too often in science. It draws the skepticism of all the people in the field," says a puzzled Yuste. "I find it hard to believe that one part of the cortex is very dynamic and the other is not." —J. TRAVIS

## Sea Sickness

### Despite cleaner cruises, diarrhea outbreaks persist

**Cruise ships are cleaner than they used to be, but their standard sanitation practices don't reliably wipe out the viruses behind a recent wave of diarrheal outbreaks, according to new reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. Halting viral epidemics on ships may require unusually rigorous measures, such as docking stricken vessels for extreme scrub downs.**

Noroviruses, or Norwalk-like viruses, spread easily through casual contact and can survive outside the body for days. In the confined spaces of ships, military camps, and overcrowded institutions, these hardy viruses often set off epidemics of diarrhea and violent vomiting. Noroviruses cause an estimated 23 million illnesses each year in the United States.

Cruise ships hosted at least 23 outbreaks of gastrointestinal illness during 2002, and noroviruses triggered more than three-quarters of those linked to a specific pathogen, says Elaine H. Cramer, a CDC consultant in Vancouver, Canada. In the Dec. 13 *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Cramer,

# SCIENCE NEWS

## This Week

Marc-Alain Widdowson, and other CDC investigators describe norovirus outbreaks on five ships operated by four different companies. More than 2,000 people were sickened in these epidemics.

On three of the ships, epidemics affected several consecutive voyages, probably because viruses survived onboard despite the recommended post-outbreak procedures that were carried out between scheduled cruises. These measures range from scrubbing public spaces to sterilizing poker chips. Outbreaks caused by a norovirus struck Holland America's *Amsterdam* on four separate voyages; the epidemic abated only after the ship was sidelined for 10 days and subjected to even more aggressive cleaning.

The spate of outbreaks in 2002 departs from an overall downward trend in gastrointestinal infections at sea. In a separate study, Cramer and two of her colleagues reviewed a trove of CDC data on cleanliness and the occurrence of stomach ailments aboard cruise ships. CDC inspectors periodically board vessels and score them on hygiene.

During the 1990s, inspectors reported improper handling of water on 55 percent of inspections and of food on 62 percent. They noted violations in equipment maintenance and dishwashing procedures in 95 percent of assessments. Half of all cruise lines nevertheless received scores deemed as passing for at least four-fifths of their inspections.

A rising percentage of cruise ships passed muster toward the end of the decade.

Meanwhile, outbreak-related cases of diarrheal diseases declined from 42 per million passenger-days between 1990 and 1995 to 35 per million passenger-days later in the decade, the researchers will report in the April 2003 *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

Megan Murray, an epidemiologist at Harvard University, cautions that general public health efforts, for example the reduction of salmonella bacteria in eggs, may explain the 1990s decline of intestinal ills on ships.

Since most of the recent outbreaks haven't been associated with food or water, proper handling of provisions may not avoid norovirus infections, says Cramer.

Once the viruses sneak on board, they don't require lapses in hygiene to spread, so "even ships with extremely high sanitation scores are going to be susceptible to norovirus [outbreaks]," says the CDC's Widdowson. —B. HARDER

## News of the Early Universe

### Findings from the cosmic microwave background

The most detailed snapshots so far of the infant universe are confirming that the cosmos consists mostly of mystery material, called dark energy, that accelerates the universe's expansion.

The new evidence comes from the Arcminute Cosmology Bolometer Array Receiver (ACBAR), a South Pole network of 16 detectors that probes the temperature of the Big Bang's remnant radiation, known as the cosmic microwave background. That radiation provides an image of what the

universe looked like about 400,000 years after the Big Bang, when photons first streamed into space.

Although the radiation has cooled to an average temperature of 2.73 kelvins, the remnant light emanating from some patches of sky is slightly cooler or hotter. These tiny hot and cold spots reveal the earliest phases of gravitational clumping of matter and radiation, the seeds of galaxy formation.

The clumping also caused the early universe to ring like a bell. As gravity forced photons to bunch together, the photons resisted by exerting an outward pressure. That push and pull set up acoustic oscillations that remain imprinted in the cosmic microwave background today.

It's the peaks and valleys in those oscillations that cosmologists analyze to measure such cosmic traits as the overall curvature of the universe and the density of matter. ACBAR's sensitivity to temperature variations over a wide range of spatial scales enabled the array to measure both these traits. The results confirm that "we live in a bizarre universe" where dark energy reigns, says ACBAR researcher Jeffrey B. Peterson of the Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

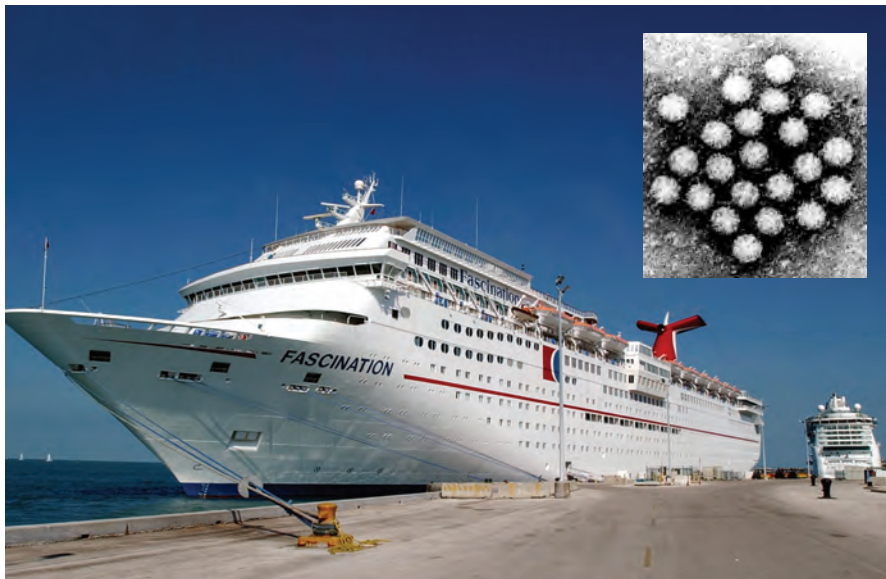
The study also provides a new hint of how photons of the microwave background interacted with hot gas in galaxy clusters in the 14 billion years that followed the Big Bang. Peterson and his colleagues recently posted their initial results online (<http://xxx.lanl.gov/abs/astro-ph/0212289>).

If further analyses uphold these findings, it could mean that galaxy clusters "are much more abundant than they appear from other observations," says Wayne Hu of the University of Chicago. That would indicate that cosmological models are incomplete.

Cosmologists are eagerly awaiting the findings from another device, the Microwave Anisotropy Probe (MAP) satellite. Unlike the ground-based ACBAR, the satellite has examined the microwave background over the entire sky. But MAP's resolution is less than that of ACBAR, so it can't discern as much detail.

"MAP will see the big picture, while ACBAR's high-resolution data enable it to zoom in on a small patch of sky," says MAP theorist David N. Spergel of Princeton University. ACBAR probes the detailed physics during the time that photons from the microwave background were beginning to be set free from matter and that acoustic oscillations were starting to be damped out, he notes.

Together, ACBAR and another high-resolution, ground-based device, the Cosmic Background Imager in Chile, "have started a new chapter in microwave-background research," says Max Tegmark of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. "The best is yet to come." —R. COWEN



**HARBORING VIRUSES** Stomach illnesses affected passengers on the *Fascination* and other ships during recent voyages. Small, round noroviruses (inset) cause many shipboard outbreaks.



**More math.**



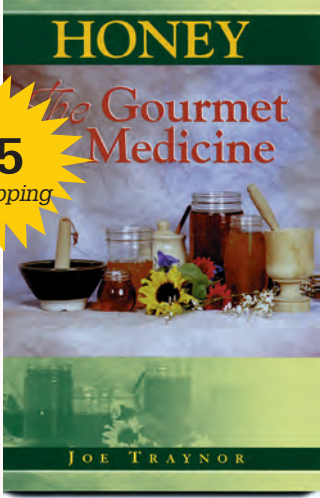
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Have you ever daydreamed about digging a hole to the other side of the world? Robert Banks not only entertains such ideas, but better yet, he supplies the mathematical know-how to turn fantasies into problem-solving adventures. In this sequel to the popular *Towing Icebergs*, *Falling Dominoes*, Banks presents another collection of puzzles for readers interested in sharpening their thinking and mathematical skills. The problems range from the wondrous to the eminently practical. In one chapter, the author helps us determine the total number of people who have lived on Earth; in another, he shows how an

understanding of mathematical curves can help a thrifty lover, armed with construction paper and scissors, keep expenses down on Valentine's Day.

In 26 chapters, Banks chooses topics that are easy to analyze using relatively simple mathematics. The phenomena he describes are ones that we encounter in our daily lives or can visualize without much trouble. How do you get the most pizza slices with the least number of cuts? To go from point A to point B in a downpour of rain, should you walk slowly, jog moderately, or run as fast as possible to get least wet? What is the length of the seam on a baseball? If all the ice in the world melted, what would happen to Florida, the Mississippi River, and Niagara Falls? Why do snowflakes have six sides?

Covering a broad range of fields, from geography and environmental studies to map- and flag-making, Banks uses basic algebra and geometry to solve problems. If famous scientists have also pondered these questions, the author shares the historical details with the reader.

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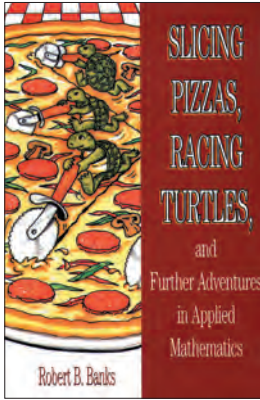
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# DRAMA IN NUMBERS

Putting a passion for mathematics on stage

BY IVARS PETERSON

As the curtain rises, an illuminated mathematical expression dominates the scene. “Do you see that theorem?” the narrator asks. “In 1637, Pierre de Fermat . . . wrote it down in the margin of a book. Then he added this tantalizing note.” A spotlight suddenly reveals a bearded, bewigged, flashily dressed Fermat, who promptly sings, “I have discovered a truly marvelous proof, a truly marvelous proof of this, which this margin is not large enough to contain.”

Next, a quick succession of vignettes portraying centuries of immense mathematical frustration spawned by Fermat’s never-recorded proof—known as Fermat’s last theorem—unfolds across the checkerboard floor of a sparsely furnished stage.

The musical number that closes this prologue introduces the play’s hero—Daniel Keane, a modestly dressed, mildly bewildered, Princeton mathematician who is claiming to have proved Fermat’s last theorem. Pursued by a gaggle of reporters, Keane fumbles to explain what he has done. One reporter inquires, “What is a proof, and who cares?”

“Fermat’s Last Tango” is billed as a musical fantasy inspired by real-life Princeton mathematician Andrew Wiles and his encounters with Fermat’s last theorem (*SN*: 11/5/94, p. 295). It’s one of several mathematics-rich stage productions of the past few years. Although these plays, with their overtly mathematical themes and number-enthralled characters, have especially captivated mathematicians, they have also attracted remarkably diverse and enthusiastic audiences.

David Auburn’s “Proof,” which hinges on the disputed authorship of a mathematical work, won the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for drama and is still running on Broadway. Tom Stoppard’s 1993 play “Arcadia,” which brings fractal geometry and chaos theory into a 19th-century setting, continues to thrive in a variety of venues.

“Each of these plays gave me considerable pleasure, albeit in very different ways,” says Robert Osserman of the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute in Berkeley, Calif. He has interviewed the playwrights of “Proof” and “Arcadia” as part of public programs including excerpts from the stage productions.

These three plays depict the pursuit of mathematics as a painful joy—an intense endeavor that can unveil an alluring beauty in ideal objects or bare mathematical symbols. In “Fermat’s Last Tango,” Keane lauds the power and purity of mathematics. The

beauty of numbers is everywhere, he tunefully proclaims.

At the same time, the pursuit of mathematics can humble or even crush a practitioner who fails to measure up to the field’s exacting demands. The plays bring to mind people’s powerful needs for recognition and connection with others doing similar work. The scripts explore the counterpoint between pure logic and the emotional complexities of everyday life, and they elucidate the meaning of *proof* in different settings.

**BEAUTIFUL PROOF** Auburn’s play “Proof,” first produced in 2000, centers on the younger daughter of a brilliant mathematician. The father, Robert, had become mentally unstable in his later years. Emotionally drained after years of taking care of him and neglecting her own education, 25-year-old Catherine must face her father’s death, deal with her manipulative, estranged sister, and cope with the amorous attentions of a former student of her father.

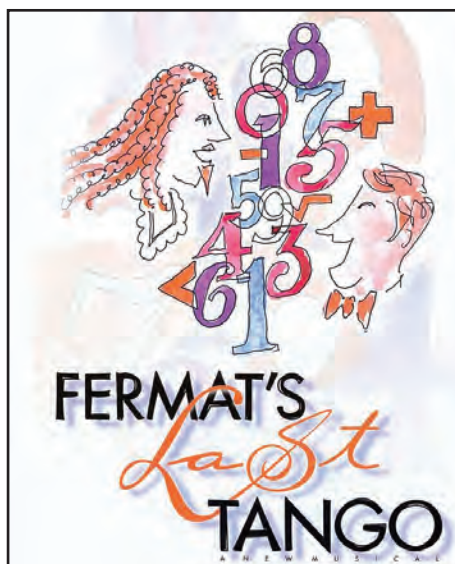
The plot centers on the authorship of a potentially outstanding mathematical proof in number theory, which was found among notebooks filled with Robert’s less-than-lucid scribbles. At first glance, the play appears to be both a mystery and a romantic comedy. On a deeper level, it raises questions about proof in human relationships as well as in math and about the stereotype that links youth and creativity.

“Auburn’s script is well-crafted, fast moving, and marked by sparkling dialog,” Donald J. Albers of the Mathematical Association of America remarked in a review of the play. “The mathematicians portrayed in ‘Proof’ come off as delightfully human and rather attractive people with whom you would probably enjoy having dinner.”

Auburn himself has stated that he did not set out to write a play about mathematicians. He was interested in exploring the question of whether mental illness, as well as talent, can be inherited. And he was attracted to the idea of sisters fighting over an item of ambiguous significance found after their parents had died. The mathematical connections came later.

Auburn ended up immersing himself in works depicting the mathematical mind. He read popular books about mathematicians such as Paul Erdős, Srinivasa Ramanujan, and John Forbes Nash, whose biography became the basis of the 2001 film *A Beautiful Mind*. The example of Wiles working in his attic for 7 years to prove Fermat’s last theorem gave Auburn a sense of the romance of mathematical work.

Members of the mathematics department at New York University offered Auburn advice and visited rehearsals. Auburn also sent copies of the play to other mathematicians, including Jean E. Tay-



**FERMAT SINGS** — This musical fantasy was inspired by Princeton mathematician Andrew Wiles’ 7-year quest to prove Fermat’s last theorem.



lor of Rutgers University. “I was surprised to find myself quite captivated by it,” Taylor says.

In “Proof,” Catherine’s spiritual mentor is the 19th-century mathematician Sophie Germain, who sent her own highly original mathematical results to Carl Friedrich Gauss under a man’s name because women then had no credibility in mathematics. Her work centered on certain numbers that are now known as Germain primes. Taylor pointed out that the example of a Germain prime given in the preliminary text was missing the term “+ 1.”

“When I first went to see ‘Proof’ and that moment came up in the play, I was happy to hear the ‘plus one’ clearly spoken,” Taylor says.

When the play opened just over 2 years ago, the Courant Institute in New York City hosted a daylong symposium that addressed some of the issues raised in the play, including the role of women in mathematics.

In Taylor’s view, the play accurately portrays some of the barriers that women still face as professional mathematicians. A man, for example, wouldn’t be expected to forego his education to take care of an ailing parent. His claim to have authored a proof would also be considered more credible. “Try to imagine the play with the sex of the characters [Catherine and her father’s student] reversed,” Taylor says.

In “Proof,” Auburn found a witty, engrossing way to explore the notion of proof in several different senses—in the idea of a mathematical proof with its particular ironclad inevitability, the notion of establishing the authorship of an intellectual work, and the daily proof that people seek to reassure themselves of the stability of reality and of their personal relationships.

**ARCADIAN CHAOS** Like “Proof,” the play “Arcadia” features a very clever young woman who has remarkable mathematical insights yet faces the skepticism of well-trained scholars who are less original in their thinking.

Thomasina Coverly is a mathematically precocious teenager of the early 19th century. Noting the irregular or branched nature of natural forms such as mountains and trees, she sets out to invent by trial and error the first mathematical framework to portray such structures.

Later, she playfully writes in her notebook, “I, Thomasina Coverly, have found a truly wonderful method whereby all the forms of nature must give up their numerical secrets and draw themselves through number alone.” Then she slyly adds, “This margin being too mean for my purpose, the reader must look elsewhere for the New Geometry of Irregular Forms discovered by Thomasina Coverly.”

The play nimbly switches back and forth between the early 19th century and modern scenes that take place in the same house. One of the contemporary characters is mathematician and biologist Valentine Coverly, who discovers Thomasina’s notebook and marvels at her insights. As it happens, Valentine himself is modeling population changes among grouse on his family’s estate. Valentine tries to explain iteration, algorithm, chaos, and other mathematical terms to a best-selling author and garden historian who’s visiting.

Stoppard’s play delves into the unsettling experience of facing new ideas, the interplay of hypothesis and evidence, and the role of human character in discovery. Yet the conversation remains sprightly and amusing, and the often-befuddled characters are engaging.

“I consider [‘Arcadia’] one of the outstanding plays of the last couple of decades, with or without the math,” Osserman says. “Stoppard is one of our greatest playwrights, and ‘Arcadia’ is one of his best—if not the best—of his plays. . . . Apart from that, the amount of serious mathematics he fits in—in a totally natural way—is just amazing. And unlike most plays that touch on mathematics, he really gets it right.”

“Arcadia” serves as an antidote to the common impression that mathematics putters along in inscrutable increments and hasn’t changed much since Euclid’s time. The play also brings mathematics to, as Valentine puts it, “. . . the ordinary-sized stuff which is our lives, the things people write poetry about—clouds—daffodils—waterfalls—and what happens in a cup of coffee when the cream goes in.”

Mathematician Robert L. Devaney of Boston University originally learned about “Arcadia” from his son, an actor in New York City. When the play was scheduled to be performed at Boston’s Huntington Theater, Devaney became an informal advisor. “I spoke several times to the director as he was putting the play together and eventually he had me talking to the cast about the mathematical ideas in the play, showing them fractals, and so on,” he says. “I became the ‘chaos consultant’ for the production.”

“Since my original involvement, I have helped out a number of school productions by getting together the math, humanities, and science teachers and students to understand the different aspects of the play,” Devaney adds. “I can’t imagine a better way to get liberal arts students involved in some contemporary mathematics.”

Devaney has developed an informative Web site describing and animating some of the mathematical ideas lurking in Stoppard’s play (*see* <http://math.bu.edu/DYSYS/arcadia/>).



**FRACTAL FERN** — In “Arcadia,” Thomasina Coverly invents a simple mathematical recipe that yields branched forms resembling ferns.

**SONG-AND-DANCE NUMBERS** “Fermat’s Last Tango” is a rare foray of mathematics-inclined playwrights into the arena of musicals. Written by Joshua Rosenblum and Joanne Sid-ney Lessner, “Fermat’s Last Tango” revels in the drama and passion associated with the centuries-long quest to elucidate Fermat’s tantalizing marginal hint.

“As a musical fantasy on the subject of wrestling with the mysterious process of discovering a proof, ‘Fermat’s Last Tango’ is in a class by itself,” Osserman says.

The musical focuses on the traumatic period between the 1993 discovery of a flaw in the proof Wiles originally presented of Fermat’s last theorem and Wiles’ circumventing of that deficiency a year later. Keane, the character standing in for Wiles, must confront the possibility of failure. Riddled with doubt, taunted by a mean-spirited Fermat, and haunted by a ghostly chorus of Pythagoras, Euclid, Isaac Newton, and Gauss, Keane returns to his singular, possibly ill-fated pursuit. He retreats to the attic, again leaving his wife as the “math widow” she had been for so many years before.

“This drama is so powerful because it describes the clash between frail humanity on the one hand and intellectual destiny on the other,” says mathematician Arthur Jaffe of Harvard University. “And it all rings true.”

The musical is also cheerful, clever, and appealing. The extraordinarily inventive lyrics of its wide-ranging score are laced with numerous mathematical and historical references. Indeed, the play’s mathematical vocabulary is surprisingly sophisticated. Imagine a song in which the phrase “Taniyama-Shimura conjecture” is heard not just once but several times.

“Of all popular portrayals of mathematics in the media, I believe that only this play contains real mathematical content,” Jaffe contends. “The authors had real insight. The characters think about mathematics just the way a real mathematician would.”

“Fermat’s Last Tango” was originally performed by the York Theater Company in New York City in December 2000. Fascinated by the play and encouraged by Wiles, Jaffe went to considerable trouble to have the production videotaped on behalf of the Clay Mathematics Institute in Cambridge, Mass., where he worked until recently. The institute continues to sell the tape. A London production of the play is now in the works.

Mathematics on stage is a scarce commodity. The recent spate of successful productions may be just the start of a beautiful marriage between mathematics and the theater. ■

# GETTING WARPED

A new exhibit on Albert Einstein dissects his slippery science

BY PETER WEISS

Science exhibits don't often come with a warning sign. But there's one at the entrance to a sprawling, new exhibit on Albert Einstein's life and science at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. The sign has no words. It's a video screen whose center is dominated by a dark blob. Around the blob yawn strangely bloated, bowed, stretched, and sometimes doubled images of museum visitors. That's how they might appear if light from them were distorted by a black hole—an unimaginably dense package of matter whose existence follows from Einstein's theories (*SN*: 9/29/01, p. 203).

What's the message of this cryptic warning? Astrophysicist Michael M. Shara, curator of the exhibit, translates it this way: "From the minute you step through the front door, we will twist your view of space and time and what your entire vision of the universe is like."

The exhibit delivers just that. Using computer simulations of warped space, time-manipulating soundscapes, and sparkling light sculptures, the displays immerse visitors in Einstein's counterintuitive science. In the exhibit's quieter, less flashy galleries, Einstein himself is minutely scrutinized. With artifacts, film footage, handwritten letters, and other documents, the exhibit probes Einstein's oft-tumultuous life—his friendships, loves, and political pursuits. The museum bills the new displays as "the most comprehensive exhibition ever on the life and theories of one of the greatest scientists of all time."

**FOLLOW THE LIGHT** Albert Einstein is best known for a handful of monumental achievements. They include his iconic equation,  $E=mc^2$ , which led ultimately to nuclear weapons, nuclear power, and enhanced understanding of the sun and other stars. Perhaps even more famous are his theories of relativity, which radically changed notions of time, space, and gravity.

Although most people are aware that Einstein fomented a revolution in physics, few are acquainted with the specific ideas behind

that upheaval, notes physics educator Gretchen Walker, who helped coordinate the exhibit for the museum. In the new exhibit, about half the display space is devoted to conveying the gist of Einstein's most renowned revelations about light, time, energy, and gravity.

"It's the first attempt to explain the essence of Einstein's scientific contribution in a museum exhibition," says physicist Hanoeh Gutfreund of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem at the recent launch of the exhibit.

The starting point for those explanations is the nature of light. Is it just a wave—as most turn-of-the-century physicists had viewed it—or also a stream of particles—as Einstein ultimately concluded? If it's a wave, then what medium does it undulate through? Is it like an ocean wave advancing through the water?

Einstein already had begun pondering such questions as a teenager in the 1890s. The exhibit includes a sheet from a six-page handwritten letter—billed as Einstein's first scientific paper—which the 16-year-old boy mailed to his uncle. In it, the budding theorist imagines what it would be like to ride on a light wave.

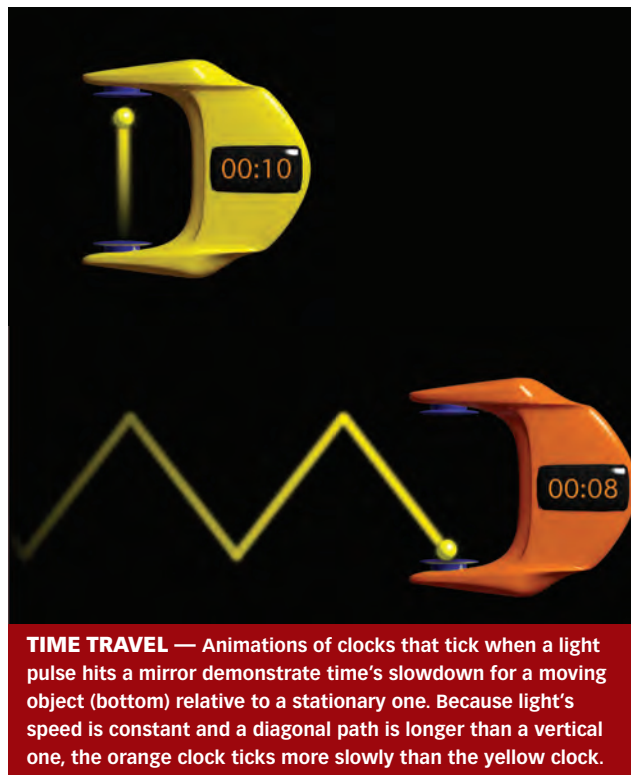
Scientists at that time considered light to be moving ripples in a tenuous, uniform medium, called the aether. They presumed that the aether filled all of space. To test for its presence, scientists observed light beams propagating simultaneously in perpendicular directions and looked for a speed difference. The idea was this: Because Earth plows through the aether as it traces its orbit, light should appear to move slowest along the direction in which the planet pushes into the aether, quickest along the opposite direction, and at intermediate speeds along other directions. Yet the experiments detected no

deviation in light's speed, regardless of direction.

This result deeply disturbed most physicists of the day.

Einstein took the findings at face value, rejected the idea that light travels through an aether, and went on to explore other logical consequences of light's apparently constant speed. One deduction is that nothing can move faster than light.

His cogitations eventually led him to develop the so-called special theory of relativity, which he first published in 1905. The theory's name connotes that it is limited to bodies that are moving at a constant speed rather than extending to objects in any type of motion. In his theory of relativity, Einstein deduced that time and



**TIME TRAVEL** — Animations of clocks that tick when a light pulse hits a mirror demonstrate time's slowdown for a moving object (bottom) relative to a stationary one. Because light's speed is constant and a diagonal path is longer than a vertical one, the orange clock ticks more slowly than the yellow clock.



space themselves must fluctuate. "He accepted a nonsensical universe," says Shara. With simple animations, the exhibit demonstrates how Einstein came to that view.

**TIME RULES** Numerous recent experiments, such as comparisons of clocks aboard planes and on the ground, have demonstrated that moving clocks tick more slowly than stationary ones. Einstein reached this conclusion theoretically from the premise that the speed of light is constant. The exhibit illustrates this logic. Adding eerie ambiance to those time-dilation displays, a staccato soundtrack of ticking clocks—some speeding up, others slowing down—plays in the background.

"It's a wonderful exhibit," comments Princeton University astrophysicist J. Richard Gott III, author of *Time Travel and Einstein's Universe* (2001, Houghton Mifflin). Says Gott: "They picked out a key item—moving clocks tick slowly—and explained it three different ways." If one explanation doesn't get through to a museum visitor, he notes, then another probably will.

On display also are six original sheets—neatly hand-written by Einstein in German—from a 72-page, 1912 manuscript on special relativity. Einstein's relativity investigations included calculations describing what happens to a body when it emits light. The results revealed that mass ( $m$ ) would be transformed into energy ( $E$ ) by a conversion factor, the speed of light ( $c$ ) squared. One of the displayed pages includes the earliest remaining inscription by Einstein of  $E=mc^2$ .

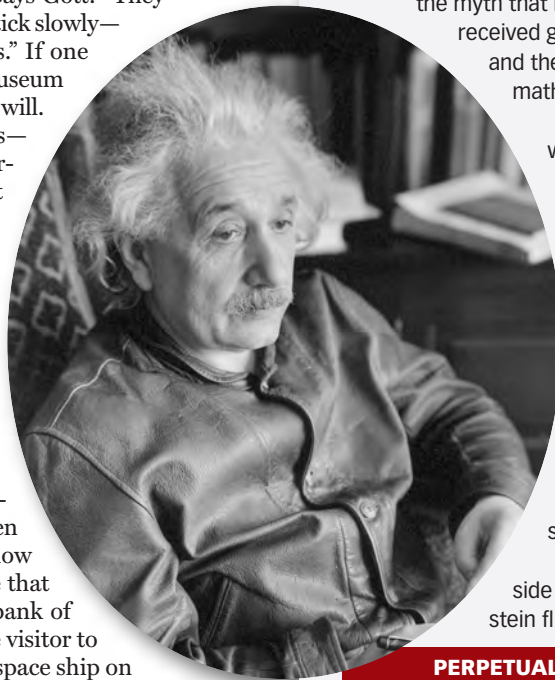
To calculate just how subtly or dramatically time will slow down for a given moving object, it's critical to know how fast the object is moving. To illustrate that aspect of time dilation, a wall-sized bank of digital clocks in the exhibit invites the visitor to suppose that Einstein had boarded a space ship on the day of his birth—March 14, 1879—and zoomed off at various speeds.

For a half-dozen speeds ranging from that of today's spaceships—essentially 0 percent of light speed—to 99.9999999 percent of light speed, the clocks indicate today's date as it would be for the space-faring Einstein. For example, in the slowest ship, Einstein would have aged 123 years, right along with his friends and family on Earth. At the fastest speed, however, nearly 20 hours of Earth time would have elapsed for each second that would have ticked by for Einstein. That means that the baby Einstein who rocketed away on the day he was born would now be only 1 day old.

Having found a cosmic speed limit—the speed of light, which is almost 300,000 kilometers per second—Einstein also exposed a profound flaw in the theory of gravity handed down by Isaac Newton centuries before. Newton had proposed that the force of gravity acts instantaneously to attract two distant masses to each other. Einstein realized that this couldn't be. His cosmic speed limit required that nothing, including gravity, could act instantaneously over a distance.

Developing an alternative explanation for gravity took Einstein a decade. He published that alternative, the general theory of relativity, in 1915. The exhibit includes original pages of a hand-written draft of that seminal report, which extends the unexpected consequences of motion to accelerating objects.

Ultimately, Einstein showed that gravity's effects result not from instantaneous action across distances but from a warping of space-time itself. The sun's mass, for instance, distorts space-time in its own vicinity. That warping confines Earth and other planets to



## The Human Equation

Taking a comprehensive look at Einstein, the man

**B**esides being a great scientist, Albert Einstein was a father of the atomic age, a passionate defender of civil liberties, an ardent pacifist, and a champion of Jewish causes. Many papers, photos, films, and other artifacts that illustrate his multiple facets are on display in the new exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

Included is his final high school report card, which dispels the myth that Einstein was a poor student. In fact, he received good-to-excellent grades in all subjects, and the highest possible marks—all 6s—in math and physics.

A letter from Einstein side-by-side with a response from Franklin Delano Roosevelt Jr. illuminates Einstein's role in prompting the United States to develop the first atomic bombs. In those letters, Einstein encourages research into such weapons, and President Roosevelt confirms that he has set in motion the machinery to pursue that goal.

Other memorabilia depict Einstein promoting socialism, fighting against Sen. Joseph McCarthy's anti-Communist witch-hunt of the early 1950s, and supporting the fledgling State of Israel.

From the collected mementos, a seamy side of Einstein also emerges. In a letter, Einstein flirts with one of the many women with

whom he—a married man—had romantic affairs.

"We don't want to whitewash him," says exhibit curator Michael M. Shara.

"Some of his family

relationships were rocky, to say the least."

The Einstein exhibit, organized by the museum, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, runs in New York until Aug. 10, 2003. It's scheduled to travel to Los Angeles in 2004 and Jerusalem in 2005. —P.W.

### PERPETUAL PONDERER

— After early theoretical triumphs, Einstein tried unsuccessfully to explain within one, unifying theory the fundamental forces then known: gravity and electromagnetism.

their elliptical orbits.

Even people's puny bodies bend space and time, albeit to a negligible degree. To give exhibit visitors a feel for this usually unperceived fact of their lives, a computer instantaneously calculates and amplifies their bodies' gravitation effects on surrounding space. As people approach a wall-sized monitor, it shows richly colored swells and dips in space-time. The biggest people and those closest to the wall trigger the most elaborate images. The display gives weight-consciousness a whole new meaning.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS** Einstein's revolution remains a work in progress. In many ways, researchers continue to explore, exploit, and test Einstein's theories. Today's physicists are observing black holes in deep space (*SN: 11/09/02, p. 299*), tuning in to hypo-

thetical ripples in space-time known as gravitational waves (SN: 5/6/00, p. 303), and fielding ultrasensitive space-time experiments, such those on the upcoming Gravity Probe B satellite (SN: 11/15/97, p. 308).

Curiously, all these pursuits stem from work Einstein had done before 1920. Although he continued to work diligently in physics until his death in 1955 at the age of 76, he produced no further landmark theories.

That's partly because Einstein was caught up during his later decades fighting a futile, rear-guard action against quantum physics, whose laws govern the realm of the very small. In particular, he objected to the randomness in particle behavior that the new approach predicted. Quantum physics proved to be, like relativity theory, a great 20th-century revolution in modern physics, but it left Einstein behind.

Ironically, Einstein initially helped build the foundations of quantum physics. Indeed, he won the 1921 Nobel Prize in Physics for a 1905 advance in which he established a theoretical grounding for the particle-like aspect of light. The exhibit includes the medal and certificate that he received with that award.

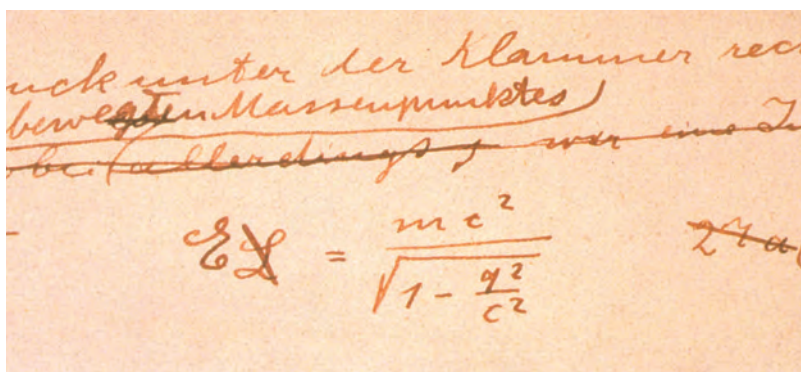
Also, by continuing to be an astute skeptic, Einstein prodded quantum physics' developers to improve their theory.

In the latter part of his life, Einstein was also preoccupied with another theoretical quest. Having already clarified the nature of electromagnetism and reformulated gravity, the aging Einstein sought to unite those two phenomena within a single, comprehensive theory.

At the time, "many physicists thought it was a fool's errand," notes Shara. Yet today many top theorists are striving to develop similarly overarching theories, such as string theory (SN: 9/22/01, p. 184). Their goal is to create a single theoretical framework that accounts for all the fundamental forces and particles in nature.

Rather than considering the last 30 years of Einstein's life a waste, Columbia University string theorist Brian R. Greene says that the period "was really what launched the current generation of work in the physical sciences." In one of the exhibit's galleries, Greene and other scientists discuss Einstein's scientific legacy in continuously running video clips.

Einstein never stopped his search for a unified theory. The day before his death on April 18, 1955, from a ruptured aortic aneurysm, Einstein asked his secretary to bring to the hospital a pad of paper on which he had been working. That very sheaf of papers, which Einstein smothered with calculations, serves as send-off as visitors leave the exhibit. ■



**FORMULA E** — Einstein wrote this version of his famous equation in a 1912 special-relativity manuscript—the oldest surviving document with the equation in Einstein's hand. Whereas the simpler form  $E=mc^2$  applies to an object at rest, the version shown here applies also to moving objects.



We are living at a turning point in human spirituality—akin to when Jesus or Buddha or Mohammed was alive—and Einstein is the new prophet. That is the audacious, provocative, and fascinating argument Corey Powell makes in this extraordinary book. Powell dubs the new faith "sci/religion" and unmask today's famous battle between science and religion as a myth.

Religion has always been where humanity looked to resolve the big issues—be they everyday ones about morality or the overarching questions of the universe. Just a few decades ago, Pope Pius XII described the period explained by the scientific theory of the Big Bang as "the epoch when the cosmos came forth from the hands of the Creator." Astronomers essentially agreed. This signified a very new relationship between scientists and priests. Morality is a secular matter now determined by conversation rather than religious edict. Therefore, Powell contends, "sci/religion" is the only fully functioning religion now in operation.

For the first time, Powell identifies Einstein as the prophet of this religious revolution. Einstein called God The Old One, and, as Powell shows, he put The Old One into his equations describing his theory of relativity. Thus he bound together two spheres of human thought, the spiritual and the scientific, in a way that had never previously been accomplished. The symbol in the relativity equations that stands for God is lambda. It is called the cosmological constant. It was also called Einstein's biggest blunder. Powell tells the story of how this controversial factor got into the equations, how the scientific community accepted, then rejected, and then accepted it again. Recent reports about how the universe is accelerating in its expansion are all based on this same factor, God in the equation. —from Free Press

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ISRAEL MUSEUM, JERUSALEM



# COLD COMFORT

## A futuristic play of cryogenic proportions

BY BRUCE BOWER

### ACT ONE, "DIE ANOTHER DAY"

*Overhead lights cast a sterile glow over a conference room dominated by a rectangular, polished wood table. A woman wearing a business suit sits at the head of the table. Three other people slump in chairs. Each wears a white smock that extends to just above bare feet. Wisps of steam waft from the heads and exposed lower arms of the sprawled forms. Behind each misting body stands a gleaming chrome cylinder.*

**WOMAN:** Wake up. Come on, wake up, sleepyheads.

*The hunched bodies groan, mumble, and begin to move.*

**WOMAN:** Yes, sit up, that's it. Shall we have some wine and cheese? I'll bet you're hungry. Let's take roll call first and make sure the gang's all here. I'll start with the Splendid Splinter, the greatest hitter in baseball history—Ted Williams. *(No response)* Step up to the plate, slugger.

**TED:** Oh my lord, how did I get here? Last I remember, my son told me to drink a special milkshake he'd whipped up for me. I took a swig and then everything went hazy. *(Pause)* I'm gonna take batting practice on that boy's behind!

**WOMAN:** Now, now. He was acting in your best interests. Next we have Carl Sagan—astronomer, author, skeptic, and the last known scientist to have appeared on a late-night television talk show without putting both the host and the audience to sleep.

**CARL:** Why yes, I'm here. Have I made contact with the great cosmic hereafter? You're not . . . no, that's impossible. It *would* be thoroughly ironic, though, given the unwillingness of modern religious systems to conceive of a female God. But, of course, the whole idea is irrational.

**WOMAN:** Indeed. Now, let's hear from Richard Feynman, physicist extraordinaire and all-purpose supersmart individual.

**DICK:** Hello. I love surprises, and I'm certainly surprised to be here. But don't call me supersmart. Just think of me as a curious dude and a wise guy.

**CARL:** That's not how your scientific colleagues referred to you, as I recall.

**DICK:** Oh, they called me much worse names—usually while I was giving lectures. But I was never boring. How many of those stick-in-the-muds still get talked about today? Say, what day *is* it?

**WOMAN:** It's the first day of the rest of your lives in the year 2102. You are now wards of the Martha Stewart Living Foundation.

**TED:** 2102? That would mean I'm, gee, 183 years old. By God, the Red Sox should have won a World Series by now.

**WOMAN:** Don't be silly. Something far less preposterous has happened. Our scientists finally figured out how to revive people from cryogenic sleep. None of you actually died. You just took metabolic time-outs while hanging upside-down in chrome cylinders *(She points to each*

*of the containers.)*, your bodies frozen solid in liquid nitrogen.

**CARL:** Lucky I wear turtleneck sweaters, even in the summer. At least, I used to wear them. *(He looks at his smock with disgust.)*

**WOMAN:** Oh, you're all lucky. First, Martha had the foresight to acquire this company back in 2005. She had made a lot of money improving the quality of people's lives, but her firm hit a rough patch. So, she took her remaining resources and invested them in the business of improving the quantity of people's lives.

**CARL:** Whoever corners the market on extending human life is going to enter a financial universe of, well, billions and billions of dollars.

**WOMAN:** I like your style. Of course, money has lost some of its value over the past century. The 7-11 down the block charges \$200 for a hot dog and a soda.

**DICK:** Ouch.

**WOMAN:** But let's look on the bright side. You're the first group to come out of the deep freeze, and we're all so happy about it here at the MSL Foundation. It means that our scientists have succeeded in regenerating frozen biological cells. It's sort of like jump-starting a dead car battery on a winter morning. I can't reveal the complex details of our discovery. Competition is fierce out there.

**DICK:** Tell me anyway. I could care less about the blood sport among business types trying to squeeze big bucks out of crying medics.

**WOMAN:** That's cry-o-gen-ics. *(She emphasizes each syllable.)*

**DICK:** *(Grinning)* Whatever. You don't have to worry about me having a yard sale with your trade secrets. I'm just like every other retired Nobel laureate—I want to devote my spare time to solving the mystery of consciousness and explaining how the brain works.



JIM PAILLOT

**CARL:** You're forgetting the big questions, Dick. What are we doing here, and what do these people plan to do with us? I never put a down payment on a cryogenics capsule, yet here I sit, steam coming out of my armpits.

**TED:** I didn't know I was cooling my cleats in this cryogenic on-deck circle, either.

**WOMAN:** None of you did. We recruited you through confidential family and professional contacts. As elite members of the scientific community, you'll serve as cryogenic ambassadors to the world now that regeneration technology is a reality.

**TED:** You've got to be kidding. Me, a scientist? And I suppose you think Dick here can hit a curve ball and Carl can throw overhand.

**WOMAN:** You wrote a book called *The Science of Hitting*, didn't you? Let's not overstate the importance of academic degrees. Consider yourself just as much of a scientist as these gentlemen. *(Pause)* Now, we're waiting for Monroe. He runs the MSL Foundation, and he'll fill you in on what we have in store for you.

*A waiter enters the room carrying a tray that holds wedges of cheese, a bottle of wine, and three glasses. He puts the tray on the table and hands a card to the woman.*

**WOMAN:** Ah, it's from Monroe. He's ready to see you. But first, eat, drink, and be merry.

**TED:** Wine and cheese? Who put this Little League menu together, Bud Selig? Let's go fishing and fry us up some real food.

**WOMAN:** No one goes anywhere until you meet Monroe.

**CARL:** Martha Stewart runs a tight ship. Where's that free-spirited Julia Child, now that we need her?

*Lights dim.*

## ACT TWO, "BODIES POLITIC"

*Ted, Carl, and Dick stand in a plush executive suite. A large window looks out on a city skyline. Oak-paneled walls accentuate an array of art deco furniture. A beefy man in a business suit smiles from behind a mahogany desk.*

**MAN:** Hello. Welcome to the future. *(He laughs casually.)* My name is Monroe. I've taken hold of the reins here at the MSL Foundation, or Martha's place, as we call it. And I believe the company's about to gallop into a position of industry leadership now that our thoroughbreds are showing some life. *(He waits for a response and gets none.)* Ah, by thoroughbreds I mean all of you.

**CARL:** We get it, sir. What we'd like to know is why we're on this ride and where it's taking us.

**DICK:** Yes. This situation has already gotten weirder than quantum physics.

**MONROE:** Please, everyone, call me Monroe. Let's get down to business, shall we? You are our first cryogenic success stories, and success creates responsibilities.

**DICK:** I know what your game is, Monroe. You put me in the big chill so I could be regenerated as your director of research operations. You sly duck.

**MONROE:** An intriguing but inaccurate inference. Science has far surpassed anything you could imagine from your 21st century perspective. So has technology. We need all of you to attend a globally broadcast press conference tomorrow where you'll announce that MSL cryogenics extended your lives, it's the real deal. Heck, you didn't feel a thing, did you? It was like taking a long, restful nap and then, pow! You came, you thawed, you conquered death. Put it in your own words.

**TED:** Well, spray paint me in pinstripes and call me a Yankee. That's it? Just tell those scribblers and microphone jockeys that we're tickled to have been pickled?

**MONROE:** Good one. You're a natural. We'd also like you all to serve as MSL Foundation spokespersons on television shows.

**CARL:** It's not that I'm averse to chatting up the media, mind you. But what a waste! You're putting us out to pasture when we're still in our intellectual prime.

**DICK:** Not to mention the good deeds that can be accomplished with these . . . what should I call them, cold capsules? Think of the many endangered wild animal species that Martha's place can save from extinction.

**MONROE:** We're saving a wild animal species, all right—politicians. *(He leans back in his leather chair.)* Remember, you come from a time when there were only a few hundred television channels. Wireless transmission advances since then have spawned 5,000 television channels, and that number is growing as we speak. And do you know what three-quarters of those channels broadcast?

**CARL:** *(With a downcast look)* Infomercials.

**TED:** Hey, they're not all so bad. I bought one of those singing fish you hang on the wall. I call him Gil Hodges.

**MONROE:** No, Carl, not infomercials—news and public affairs shows. Nearly 4,000 channels serve up headline news and commentary, all the time, day and night. Those shows are cheap to produce and highly profitable, believe you me. I think we have more people covering news than making news these days. But there aren't enough political analysts and social pundits to go around. That's why we've been cryogenically canning as many politicians as we can. Now, we can regenerate a whole army of talking heads for hire.

**CARL:** Which politicians are you talking about?

**MONROE:** Oh, let's see, there's Bill, Hillary, George W., Al, Colin . . . you get the picture.

**TED:** How about Strom Thurmond?

**MONROE:** No, he's still alive. But we have an impressive stable of ready-for-prime-time pontificators waiting to come in from the cold. And each of you has led the way in making their political comebacks possible.

**DICK:** So, you used us to get regeneration technology up and running, and now you're going to have us sell freeze-dried blowhards for the boob tube.

**MONROE:** It's the natural cycle of scientific enterprise. Remember the Human Genome Project? It started out as a great DNA-dissection adventure, stimulated a raft of research into the genetics of disease, and after a few decades, morphed into a bunch of secretive DNA firms that sell medical breakthroughs directly to people who have enough money or insurance.

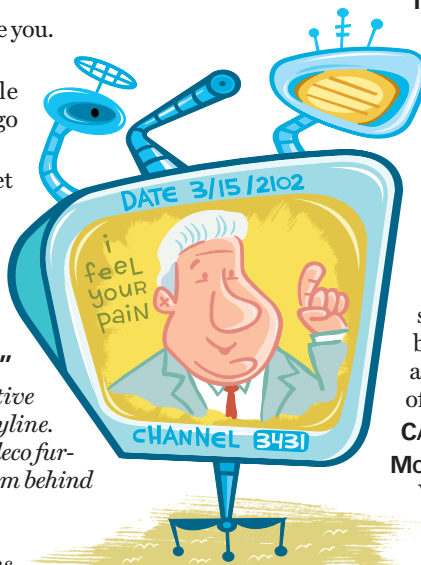
**TED:** Whew. I think we all just got knocked on our keisters by a high, hard one under the chin.

**CARL:** Baseball is truly a metaphor for life, even among formerly frozen folk. I think it's time to dust myself off, crawl back into my cryogenic clubhouse, and ice myself down for another 100 years or so. Maybe then I can be put to better use. Want to join me, fellas?

*Dick and Ted nod their heads in approval.*

**MONROE:** If that's what you really want. Personal choice means so much here at Martha's place. As our motto says, it's a good thing.

*Lights dim.* ■





# OF NOTE

## PALEONTOLOGY

### New fossil weighs in on primate origins

Excavations in Wyoming have yielded the partial skeleton of a 55-million-year-old primate that probably was a close relative of the ancestor of modern monkeys, apes, and people. The creature was built for hanging tightly onto tree branches, not for leaping from tree to tree, as some scientists had speculated, based on earlier fragmentary finds. Also, despite expectations, the ancient primate didn't have eyes specialized for spotting insects and other prey.

Jonathan I. Bloch and Doug M. Boyer, both of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, unearthed the new specimen. It belonged to a

group of small, long-tailed primates that lived just before the evolution of creatures with traits characteristic of modern primates—relatively large brains, grasping hands and feet with nails instead of claws, forward-facing eyes to enhance vision, and limbs capable of prodigious leaping.

The new find, in the genus *Carpolestes*, had long hands and feet with opposable digits, Bloch and Boyer report in the Nov. 22 *Science*. The animal grew nails on its opposable digits, and claws on its other fingers and toes. Unlike later primates, *Carpolestes* had side-facing eyes and lacked hind limbs designed for leaping. —B.B.

## IMMUNOLOGY

### Herpes vaccine progresses

A vaccine against the herpes-simplex-2 virus, which causes genital herpes, protects some women, provided they haven't had a genital or oral herpes infection before.

The vaccine consists of a molecule patterned after a protein that sits on the surface of the herpes-2 virus and a natural immune boosting substance called 3-O-deacylated monophosphoryl lipid A, says Lawrence Stanberry of the University of

Texas Medical Branch in Galveston.

He and his colleagues identified 2,714 people in five countries whose regular sex partners have genital herpes. About one-third of the volunteers had no sign of oral or genital herpes at the start of the study. The rest had antibodies to herpes-simplex-1 virus, which causes cold sores.

The researchers gave half the volunteers three vaccine injections over 6 months. The others got inert injections as a placebo.

Of women who had no herpes at the start of the 19-month study, 22 percent of those getting a placebo subsequently acquired a genital herpes infection. In

contrast, only 12 percent of vaccinated women developed such an infection, the researchers report in the Nov. 21 *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Women who had had oral herpes before the study gained little protection from the vaccine.

This suggests that oral herpes might interfere with the vaccine's building a reservoir of immune cells and antibodies

against genital herpes, Stanberry says.

The vaccine didn't protect men, regardless of whether they had oral herpes. Vaccine-stimulated immune proteins and cells may be more potent against herpes viruses contracted on the vaginal lining than on the skin of the penis, Stanberry says. —N.S.

## PHYSICS

### Prying apart antimatter

Physicists in Switzerland have taken the first peek inside atoms of antimatter. The new experiments, which probed antihydrogen atoms, show no sign that physical laws differ between this exotic matter and ordinary matter. The new observations set the stage for far more precise comparisons that researchers say will test the foundations of modern physics.

Prevailing theories hold that antihydrogen and hydrogen are identical except for having constituents with opposite electrical charges. An atom of antihydrogen comprises a positively charged positron—the antimatter twin of the electron— orbiting a negatively charged antiproton. Scientists made the first atoms of antihydrogen in the mid-1990s within an accel-

erator, but those particles moved too quickly to be closely studied.

In October, a team of researchers at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva reported making the first slow-moving antihydrogen atoms (*SN: 11/2/02, p. 286*)—a step toward high-precision measurements of the atoms' properties.

Now, a second CERN group, known by the acronym ATRAP, has independently made slow-paced antihydrogen atoms. Plus, the ATRAP team took another step: They used an electric field to pry apart the exotic atoms' positrons and antiprotons. "That gives us a peek inside," says ATRAP spokesman Gerald Gabrielse of Harvard University.

By revealing how tightly joined those components were, the prying provided a measure of the so-called ionization energies of antihydrogen atoms at different levels of excitation.

That's the kind of data physicists need for even more precise comparisons between matter and antimatter. Gabrielse and his colleagues describe their findings in the Nov. 18 and Dec. 2 issues of *Physical Review Letters*. —P.W.

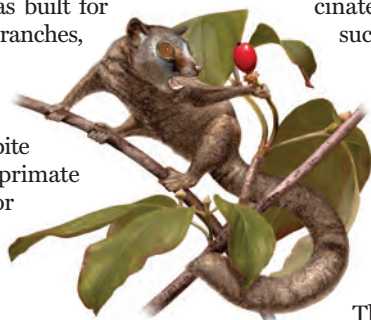
## ANTHROPOLOGY

### Ethiopians reveal high-altitude twist

There's more than one way for people living at extremely high altitudes to adapt to so-called thin air. Biologically, there must be at least three ways, according to a report in an upcoming *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

A team led by Cynthia M. Beall of Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland obtained blood samples and medical data from 236 Ethiopian villagers living more than 2 miles above sea level. The villagers displayed an average blood concentration of oxygen-rich hemoglobin comparable to that already reported for sea-level populations. Oxygen saturation of hemoglobin among the Ethiopians also roughly equaled measurements made in lowland groups. The researchers now plan to look for a biological mechanism to explain how these people survive at their high altitude.

Previous research directed by Beall had found a high blood-hemoglobin concentration but low hemoglobin-oxygen saturation among Andean highlanders. Beall also reported that high-altitude Tibetans possess a blood-hemoglobin concentration similar to sea-level folk combined with low oxygen saturation. —B.B.



**GET A GRIP** Illustration depicts 55-million-year-old primate, based on its newly discovered skeleton.

## MEETINGS

American Geophysical Union  
San Francisco  
December 6–10

## PLANETARY SCIENCE

## Fresh crater found on lunar images

Scientists analyzing images of the moon's surface taken from lunar orbit believe they've identified the crater that formed when a small asteroid slammed into the moon almost 5 decades ago.

Early in the evening of Nov. 14, 1953, an amateur astronomer in Oklahoma observed and photographed a bright flash—believed to be the impact of an extraterrestrial object—on the moon's surface. Although the camera's exposure was set for 0.5 seconds, the flash probably lasted about 1 s, says Bonnie J. Buratti, a planetary astronomer at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif.

Using the brightness of the flash and its estimated duration, she and Lane L. Johnson of Pomona College in Claremont, Calif., estimate that the energy of the impact was equivalent to that released by exploding 500,000 tons of TNT. Only about 0.3 percent of the kinetic energy was converted into visible light, Buratti notes. Much of the remainder vaporized rocks, generated huge seismic waves, and blasted a crater.

The pockmark formed by the 1953 impact isn't large enough to be resolved by earthbound telescopes. Images of the impact's area garnered by Clementine, a Department of Defense–designed probe that mapped the moon in 1994, show a bright, bluish halo about 1.5 kilometers across. The images don't show a crater inside the halo because the photos were snapped when the sun was high in the lunar sky and shadows were minimal. Nevertheless, the blue tinge suggests its material is freshly excavated, says Buratti.

The researchers estimate the crater to be about 300 meters across and 60 m deep. The stony asteroid that smacked the moon was therefore probably about 20 m in diameter. Objects that size probably strike Earth or the moon once every decade or so. —S.P.

## EARTH SCIENCE

## Warm arctic summer melted much ice

Satellite observations of the Arctic Ocean show that the amount of sea ice there this year was the lowest it's been in more than 20 years.

In September, the extent of the sea ice—

defined as the area in which ice covers at least 15 percent of the ocean's surface—was 5.27 million square kilometers, says Julianne C. Stroeve, a climatologist at the National Snow and Ice Data Center in Boulder, Colo. Of that area, sea ice actually covered about 3.6 million square kilometers, a figure 17 percent lower than normal for that time of year and 9 percent below the previous minimum for a September. The earlier record low was set in 1998, during the late stages of the strongest El Niño ever seen and when the global average temperature had been much higher than normal for several months.

Satellites have been monitoring arctic sea ice since 1978. Since then, annual ice coverage has dropped about 3 percent per decade, and September ice coverage has declined 8 percent per decade.

Several factors contributed to the low ice cover this year, says Stroeve. From March through May, southerly winds pushed ice away from the northern shores of Eurasia and North America. Because the open water absorbed more radiation than snow-covered ice would have, the near-shore waters warmed and accelerated melting at the edges of the ice packs. From June through August, unusually warm and persistently stormy conditions blanketed the Arctic Ocean, fracturing the and further fostering melting.

Unlike earlier years with low ice coverage, this year the sea northeast of Greenland was relatively free of ice. —S.P.

## ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCE

## Contrails forecast on the horizon

Studies of the contrails generated by jets flying high over Alaska may lead to improved techniques for predicting the formation of these artificial clouds, which some scientists suggest have a warming effect on Earth's climate.

The skies over Fairbanks, Alaska, are busy because the city lies beneath air routes between North America and the Far East, as well as the flight paths between nearby Anchorage and cities in Europe. Between March 2000 and July 2002, more than 2,500 jets passed within 80 kilometers of Fairbanks International Airport, says Martha Shulski, an atmospheric scientist at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks.

Of those aircraft, about 10 percent flew

past during daylight hours with good visibility and within 4 hours of when weather instruments were lofted from the airport. The scientists observed contrails in 223 instances, and the clouds' lifespans varied from a few seconds to several hours, says Shulski. In 20 cases, researchers spotted an aircraft that didn't produce a contrail.

About 97 percent of the contrails that lasted more than 10 minutes formed in air with a relative humidity greater than 25 percent. On the other hand, most of the aircraft that didn't produce contrails were flying through air with a relative humidity less than 25 percent.

Shulski and her colleagues have used their observations to develop a mathematical model for predicting whether or not contrails will form behind an aircraft. The new model is correct 92 percent of the time but doesn't do a good job at predicting how long contrails will persist, a factor needed for scientists to estimate the clouds' effect on global climate. Future analyses will investigate the effect of wind speed and wind shear on the spread and lifetime of contrails. —S.P.

## EARTH SCIENCE

## Toppling icebergs sped breakup of Larsen B ice shelf

Early this year, most of Antarctica's Larsen B ice shelf fell apart during the region's warmest summer on record (*SN*: 3/30/02, p. 197). Now, scientists think they know what accelerated that rapid disintegration.

In just 5 weeks, a 3,200-square-kilometer, Rhode Island–size section of the ice shelf collapsed and spread into a 6,750-square-kilometer mélange of icebergs, says Douglas R. MacAyeal of the University of Chicago. However, only about 1,600 square kilometers of that area appeared white and covered with snow, as the ice shelf had. The rest of the exposed ice was riddled with rocks and showed the distinct blue color of ice that's been compressed in glaciers. On satellite images, the sea “looked like a big blue Slurpee,” says MacAyeal.

That exposed glacial ice provides a big clue about why the ice shelf disintegrated so quickly. MacAyeal and his colleagues speculate that much of the shelf had been fractured into tall, thin bits that resembled dominos standing on end—a configuration that would become unstable if the fragments weren't tightly packed. Once the outer edge of the ice shelf gave way, individual domino-bergs began to wedge each other apart as they fell over. —S.P.



# Books

A selection of new and notable books of scientific interest

## BROTHERHOOD OF THE BOMB: The Tangled Lives and Loyalties of Robert Oppenheimer, Ernest Lawrence, and Edward Teller

GREGG HERKEN

Ten years in the making, Herken's book blends information from private papers, interviews with Manhattan Project survivors, recently released documents, coded intercepts obtained from FBI and KGB archives, and other sources. Together, this wealth of data tells a fascinating tale about three legendary scientists. Herken's story of the collaboration of Robert Oppenheimer, Ernest Lawrence, and Edward Teller is rife with intrigue and the effects of massive egos. The author tells how Oppenheimer hid his radical past during the developing years of the Manhattan Project and how it caught up with him during the reign of McCarthyism years later. Teller's agenda to make larger and larger hydrogen bombs also comes to light, as well as his will to get his way. A most fascinating twist is the spy-versus-counterspy, United States-versus-Soviet Union game that touched these men. Herken blends all these aspects to provide a complete and compelling narrative of the advent of weapons of mass destruction. *H. Holt, 2002, 448 p., hardcover, \$30.00.*

## MEASURING AMERICA: How an Untamed Wilderness Shaped the United States and Fulfilled the Promise of Democracy

ANDRO LINKLATER

On the banks of the Ohio River—in East Liverpool, Ohio—stands a marker that reads, "The Point of the Beginning." Few people today take note of the words, or understand the significance of the land survey that originated at this spot on Sept. 30, 1785. Linklater presents a stirring account of the work that surveyors did from East Liverpool to the Pacific Ocean and north-to-south from the Canadian border to Mexico. The author illustrates how the effort created a pattern of land ownership unique in history. As that story unfolds, so does the tale of the system of measurement used to chart 3 million square miles of territory. This choice kept this country's dimensions in acres and miles instead of hectares and kilometers. Linklater paints fascinating portraits of men from Ferdinand Hassler, who introduced the American Customary System of measurement used today, to Edward Gunter, who in the sixteenth century invented the surveyor's chain that was central to the survey and this country's way of measuring land since its beginnings. *Walker, 2002, 310 p., hardcover, \$26.00.*



## THE ODD QUANTUM

SAM TREIMAN

The principles of quantum mechanics seem to fly in the face of common sense, frustrating nonspecialists. Princeton physics professor Treiman's introduc-

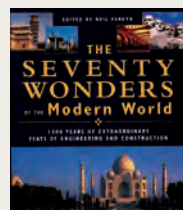


tion seeks to overcome this problem. Although he writes for a general audience, he strives to convey the substance, methods, and oddities of quantum mechanics without abandoning the basic mathematics. Beginning with the accomplishments of the founding fathers of the field—Niels Bohr, Erwin Schrödinger, Werner Heisenberg—he explains the intrinsically probabilistic nature of quantum mechanics, explores the strictly identical nature of quantum particles, and tells how such particles can move through barriers and in regions of space forbidden by classical mechanics. Emphasizing the wave aspects of the subject, Treiman concludes by delving into the intricacies of quantum field theory. Originally published in hardcover in 1999. *Princeton U Pr, 2002, 262 p., paperback, \$16.95.*

## THE SEVENTY WONDERS OF THE MODERN WORLD: 1,500 Years of Extraordinary Feats of Engineering and Construction

NEIL PARKYN, ED.

How was the Empire State Building constructed? Why doesn't the Leaning Tower of Pisa fall over?

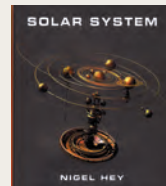


How can the Akashi Kaikyo suspension bridge in Japan span 1.4 miles yet withstand earthquakes and typhoons? These questions are answered in profiles of some of the most famous structures ever built. Chosen by virtue of not only a structure's impressiveness, but also by its aesthetic power and durability, these bridges, buildings, statues, and dams include structures built using traditional methods and materials. Others represent the latest in computer-aided design and space-age technology, such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, and Kansai Airport in Japan. Brilliant color photographs and diagrams bring each specimen to life. *Thames Hudson, 2002, 304 p., color photos/illus., hardcover, \$40.00.*

## SOLAR SYSTEM

NIGEL HEY

Drawing on the most recent data retrieved by spacecraft such as Galileo and Cassini, Hey offers a vibrant introduction to the sun, the nine primary planets in our solar system, and the asteroids and comets that accompany them. He gives attention to technology, as well as astronomers' theories about planets and whether they might harbor life. Essays written by luminaries such as Arthur C. Clarke and Donald Gray offer insiders' analyses that enhance profiles of individual planets and provide a solid introduction to space studies. Originally published in the United Kingdom in 2002. *Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002, 272 p., color photos, hardcover, \$24.95.*



# LETTERS

## Critical concern

I am concerned about the article "Neptunium Nukes? Little-studied metal goes critical" (*SN: 10/26/02, p. 259*). It addresses the mass of fissile materials needed to "make a bomb," yet it's clear that the critical masses given—10 kilograms for plutonium-239, 50 kg for uranium-235, and 60 kg for neptunium-237—are for bare spheres with no neutron moderation, reflection, or other factors contributing to going critical. Consider that the International Atomic Energy Agency controls quantities of 8 kg of <sup>239</sup>Pu and 25 kg for <sup>235</sup>U and that these quantities probably relate to masses needed for crude "bombs." Further, in some processing plants, a mass of about one-half a kilogram is used as a guideline for the minimum quantity of <sup>239</sup>Pu or <sup>235</sup>U, which can, given optimum conditions, go critical. I think the article could mislead people on what quantities need protection.

ROBERT MARSHALL, SANTA FE, N.M.

## The old bawl game

Your readers need not wait to do less crying in the kitchen ("Less Crying in the Kitchen: Tasty, tearfree onions on the horizon," *SN: 10/19/02, p. 244*). All you have to do is put the onions in the refrigerator for a half hour or in the freezer for 10 minutes.

DANIEL F. BARIKAT, LEBANON, MO.

Another solution is to do the chopping outside. I have found that more turbulent, outside air reduces onion-chopping stress.

CHRISTOPHER BILTOFT, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

The last line says these so-called improved onions may be "more prone to attack by insects and microorganisms." That ought to keep the scientists busy developing insecticides, fungicides, and so on—all to solve the inconvenience of cooking with healthful onions.

BARBARA CUSHING, KILLINGWORTH, CONN.

## It is rocket science

In "News flash: Earth still has only one moon" (*SN: 10/26/02, p. 269*) concerning the Apollo rocket's third stage returning to Earth orbit, how did the researchers determine the source to be Apollo 12, since there were six other Apollo moon missions? Did they use some fancy orbital mechanics along with statistical probability?

GEORGE RICHESON, BRENHAM, TEXAS

*Yes, they did, and the orbit matched. Also, the researchers found no evidence of the object in images that had been taken before the launch of Apollo 12.* —R. COWEN

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# SCIENCE NEWS

## Of the year

THE WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE OF SCIENCE

## A year of twists and turns

**What the world needs, say some people,** is more one-handed scientists. That way, reports would have fewer sentences starting, “On the other hand. . .”

Actually, scientists need all the hands they can muster. Most of the phenomena they investigate are so complex that even carefully designed experiments can't take into account all possible influences on the results. Change one condition—a chemical concentration, a nutritional state—and an experiment can yield dramatically different data. Or worse, factors that scientists haven't even considered can turn out to be the main drivers. What scientists know for sure is that today's conclusions may well be overturned by tomorrow's data.

This frustrating aspect of science was magnificently demonstrated this year with the surprising findings of two trials of hormone-replacement therapy. Previous studies had convinced doctors to prescribe estrogen and progesterin supplements to millions of women, primarily to prevent heart disease. But in large, rigorously designed U.S. studies, women receiving the treatment experienced more blood clots and either more or the same amount of heart disease and strokes than did the women who didn't get the supplement (*SN*: 7/27/02, p. 61).

Luckily, not every follow-up study contradicts earlier work. The longest follow-up studies on breast cancer surgery confirmed that the breast-sparing surgery called lumpectomy benefits women just as much as having an entire breast removed (*SN*: 10/19/02, p. 243).

Yet many of the 2002 scientific findings that we list below challenge earlier results. Mars may not have had a continuously warm, wet past. Neutrinos have mass after all. Diamond isn't the sturdiest material.

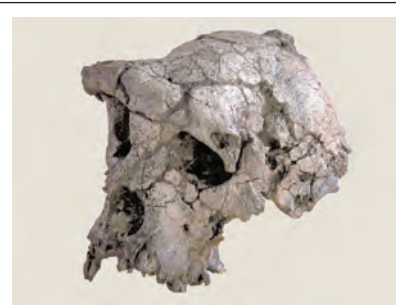
So, what you learned in school years ago—or what you read just last year—doesn't necessarily correspond with today's scientific conclusions. To keep current, you'll want to follow the twists and turns as researchers apply new technologies and carry out larger, longer, and smarter studies. At *Science News*, now in its 80th year of publication, all hands are devoted to keeping you up-to-date with timely, concise reports. —*Julie Ann Miller, Editor*

\* An asterisk indicates that the text of the item is available free on **SCIENCE NEWS ONLINE** (<http://www.sciencenews.org>).

**HOW TO OBTAIN FULL ARTICLES** This review lists important science stories of 2002 reported in the pages of *SCIENCE NEWS*. The reference after each item gives the volume and page number on which the main article appeared (vol. 161 is January–June; vol. 162 is July–December). Full text of any article can be obtained free by **SCIENCE NEWS** subscribers who register at **SCIENCE NEWS ONLINE** or for \$2.50 from ProQuest (<http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/sciencenews>). Back issues are available for \$3 each (prepaid). Send orders to **SCIENCE NEWS**, 1719 N Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

## Anthropology & Archaeology

**Fair enough** People everywhere divvy up food and make other deals based on social concepts of fairness, not individual self-interest, a cross-cultural project found (161: 104).



Researchers announced the discovery of a fossil skull representing the earliest known member of the human evolutionary family, which lived in central Africa nearly 7 million years ago (162: 19\*). Other scientists argued that the skull instead comes from an ancient ape (162: 253).

**Erectus set** A newly found fossil skull entered an ongoing debate about whether the human ancestor *Homo erectus* was a single species or several (161: 179\*).

**Genetic divide** Investigators reported that the distinctive looks and thinking styles of people and chimpanzees derive from contrasting actions of their similar DNA sequences (161: 227).

**Early writers** Excavators of an ancient site in southeastern Mexico stirred controversy with the announcement that they had



Archaeological discoveries indicated that ancient groups in Mexico and Central America believed in a sacred landscape and held key rituals in natural and human-made caves (161: 314\*).

BRUNET/NATURE; J. BRADY



found examples of the earliest known writing in the Americas (162: 355).

**Neander-tot** An anthropologist recovered the 40,000-year-old skeleton of a Neanderthal baby from a French museum, where it had been stored and forgotten for nearly 90 years (162: 148).

**Cracking up** Scientists unearthed the first chimpanzee archaeological site, which included stone nut-cracking implements (161: 195\*). Another dig yielded evidence that hard-shelled nuts were a dietary staple of human ancestors living in the Middle East 780,000 years ago (161: 117).

**DNA diaspora** A controversial genetic analysis concluded that *Homo sapiens* evolved by leaving Africa in multiple waves beginning at least 600,000 years ago and then interbreeding with Neanderthals and other close relatives (161: 149).

**Lake likers** Chilean excavations revealed that, starting around 13,000 years ago, people lived at extremely high altitudes during rainy periods, when they could set up hunting camps on the shores of mountain lakes (162: 259\*).

**Ancient care** A nearly toothless fossil jaw found in France reignited scientific debate over whether skeletal remains of physically disabled individuals show that our Stone Age ancestors provided life-saving aid to the ill and infirm (162: 328).

## Astronomy

**Cosmic age** Setting their sights on the galaxy's faintest stars, scientists calculated the universe's age to be between 13 billion and 14 billion years (161: 277).

**Sharper vision** A newly installed camera on the Hubble Space Telescope produced a picture of the distant universe that ranks as the sharpest and most detailed ever recorded (161: 278). Other Hubble images demonstrated that the craft's infrared vision has been restored after 3 years of blindness (161: 358).

**Galactic birth** Observing a tiny galaxy still in the process of being born, astronomers got a rare glimpse of how larger galaxies formed early in the history of the universe (162: 164).

**Cosmic evidence** New observations of the cosmic microwave background provided additional support for the Big Bang (162: 195\*). The most detailed snapshots of the

### PENETRATING VIEW

Sensitive X-ray, infrared, and radio telescopes are providing an extraordinarily clear view of the dust-shrouded center of our galaxy (161: 122\*). This mosaic of X-ray images reveals hundreds of point sources at the Milky Way's core, including white dwarf stars, neutron stars, and stellar-mass black holes. All are bathed in a fog of multimillion-degree gas that surrounds a supermassive black hole.



infant universe ever recorded are providing additional evidence that a mystery material makes up the bulk of the cosmos' energy and is accelerating the rate at which the universe expands (162: 390).

**Early starbirth** Using new computer models, astronomers explored the birth of the first stars in unprecedented detail (161: 362\*).

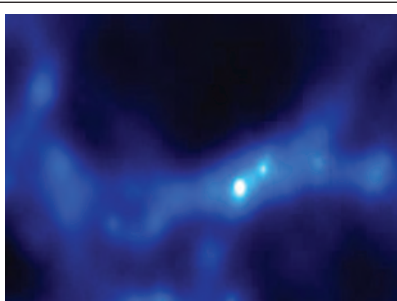
**Celestial divide** Analyzing data from a mammoth sky survey, astronomers found that there are two distinct families of galaxies, according to stellar mass (162: 244).

**Stellar relic** Astronomers found a star so old and chemically primitive that it carries vestiges of the origin of our galaxy (162: 277\*).

**Galactic brush up** A vast, invisible halo of hot gas envelops the Milky Way and could be brushing up against our nearest galactic neighbors (161: 21).

**First structures** Researchers uncovered new details about the earliest galaxies and galaxy clusters in the universe (161: 196).

**Superwinds** New measurements revealed that some of the earliest galaxies in the uni-



Using new computer models, astronomers explored the birth of the first stars in unprecedented detail (161: 362\*).

verse produced winds so powerful and persistent that they profoundly influenced the evolution of future generations of galaxies (161: 244).

**Super findings** Astronomers welcomed the discovery of two supermassive black holes in one galaxy (162: 339\*). Other researchers found the best evidence to date that a supermassive black hole lies at the Milky Way's core (162: 301).

**Middle class** Two teams of astronomers reported that they had confirmed the existence of a new, midsize class of black hole (162: 180\*).

**Burst findings** New evidence supports the notion that gamma-ray bursts, the most violent explosions in the universe, are the primal calling cards of newborn black holes (161: 228). A sizable minority of gamma-ray bursts may originate in relatively nearby galaxies (161: 37).

**Martian water** A catastrophic outpouring of water—in a volume four times that of Lake Tahoe—may have gushed from fissures near the equator on Mars as recently as 10 million years ago (161: 157). Yet contrary to a popular model in which ancient Mars was warm, wet, and hospitable to life, the Red Planet may have been cold and dry for most of its history, with only brief episodes of scalding rain and flash flooding (162: 372).

**Rays from Mars** Astronomers obtained the first X-ray image of the Red Planet (162: 342).

**Howdy neighbors!** Astronomers discovered 12 previously unknown stars that lie within a mere 33 light-years of Earth (161: 77).

**Stormy weather** Two titanic storms in Jupiter's upper atmosphere collided (161: 85\*).

# SCIENCE NEWS

## Of the year

**Planetary milestone** Extrasolar-planet hunters came up with a landmark finding: a Jupiterlike planet orbiting a sunlike star at a Jupiterlike distance (161: 371\*).

**Hints of planets** Images of gaps, rings, arcs, warps, and clumps in disks of dusty debris surrounding nearby stars provided new clues to the nature of planets beyond the solar system (161: 280\*).

**Weighing in** Astronomers measured the mass of a planet outside the solar system (162: 358).

**Belt of its own** Astronomers reported the first evidence that a young star has an orbiting belt of asteroids held in place by a massive, unseen planet (161: 388).

**Big breakup** A comet split into 19 fragments strung out along a million-kilometer-long chain (162: 69).

**Smashing study** Planetary scientists have for the first time precisely dated a collision that smashed an asteroid into fragments (162: 30).

**Seeing Pluto** Astronomers were given two rare opportunities to peer through the atmosphere of Pluto (162: 148).

**Sunspot mystery** The sharpest visible-light images of the sun ever recorded revealed puzzling new features of sunspots (162: 310).

**Volcanic record holder** Pointing a ground-based telescope at Jupiter's moon Io, astronomers reported finding the most powerful volcano ever observed in the solar system (162: 326).

## Behavior

**Attention loss** Imaging data indicated that the brains of children diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder are slightly smaller than those of their peers without psychiatric disorders (162: 227\*).

**Abused kids** A long-term study found that a genetic variant linked to high concentrations of certain brain chemicals protects abused children from becoming violent and impulsive later in life (162: 68). Another study suggested that physical abuse at home

tunes a child's perceptual system to pick up facial signs of anger (161: 389).

**Psychotic biology** Two genes involved in transmission of glutamate, a key chemical messenger in the brain, were implicated in the severe mental disorder schizophrenia (162: 195).

**Evo-upstarts** Researchers presented theoretical alternatives to the influential notion that genetic competition during the Stone Age yielded human brains prewired for specific types of thinking (162: 186).

**Good grief** In a 2-year study, bereaved spouses who often talked with others and briefly wrote in diaries about their emotions fared no better psychologically than their tight-lipped, unexpressive counterparts did (161: 131\*).

**Social net** A variety of studies explored the nature of social interactions on the Internet, from the factors that make for efficient online corporate work groups to the motivations for joining white supremacist chat rooms (161: 282\*).

**Face time** Babies studied between ages 6 and 9 months lost their ability to distinguish individual faces in animal species but started to develop an expertise in discerning human faces (161: 307\*).

**Inner me** Experiments with a split-brain patient suggested that left-hemisphere structures contribute to the conscious understanding of oneself (162: 118\*).



### CALCULATING KIDS

Reports of babies' basic counting capabilities inspired a wave of new research and a spirited debate about infants' number knowledge (161: 392\*).

**Conscious brain** A reanalysis of brain-imaging data linked conscious visual experience to activity throughout the brain, challenging the popular view that only a few specific brain areas coordinate this mental state (162: 251).

**Drug ranks** Male monkeys' social position influenced their brains' chemical susceptibility to cocaine's addictive pull (161: 53\*).

**Cigarette smokers** In a surprising finding with implications for understanding nicotine addiction, cigarette smokers monitored for 1 week reported feeling no different just before they lit up than at other times when they weren't smoking (162: 340).

**Disorder dip** A controversial report concluded that far fewer people suffer from mental disorders requiring treatment than earlier surveys had indicated (161: 102).

**Snooze power** Scientists found that a brief daytime nap may block or even reverse learning declines that occur during extended practice of a perceptual task (161: 341\*).

**War torn** A substantial and largely unnoticed minority of war reporters and photographers told investigators that they had developed symptoms of a severe stress disorder as a result of their jobs (162: 165).

## Biomedicine

**Anthrax advances** Spurred by threats of bioterrorism, researchers unveiled the anthrax bacterium's genome (161: 317\*) and reported possible ways of blocking its deadly effects (162: 115\*).

**New vaccines** In women, vaccines stopped human papillomavirus, the cause of cervical cancer (162: 323); 10 common bacteria that cause bladder infections (161: 5); and the virus that causes genital herpes (162: 399). Another vaccine protected kidney-dialysis patients from common blood infections (161: 99). In the lab, a malaria vaccine showed promise (162: 99), and a vaccine fashioned from pieces of the viruses that cause dengue fever and West Nile fever protected mice against West Nile infections (161: 164).

**Estrogen redux** Several studies indicated that the health risks associated with estrogen therapy for postmenopausal women outweigh its benefits (162: 61\*).

**Cancer therapies** Among women who harbor mutations in the *BRCA* genes, ovary



removal reduced the risk of ovarian, peritoneal, and breast cancers (161: 323\*). Three new drugs stopped acute myeloid leukemia in mice, suggesting new treatments against this deadly blood cancer in people (161: 371\*).

**Inflammation and disease** Researchers gathered evidence that inflammation precedes and predicts diabetes (162: 136\*) and showed that people who died suddenly of heart attacks had an abundance of C-reactive protein, an indicator of inflammation, in their blood (161: 244).

**The age of Alzheimer's** A pharmaceutical company halted tests of vaccine against Alzheimer's (161: 109), but a drug showed it can interfere with deposits of amyloid, like those in the brains of people with Alzheimer's disease (161: 307).

**Smallpox scourge** Government scientists found that stockpiled smallpox vaccine doses can be diluted to one-tenth their original concentration and still be effective (161: 238). And researchers calculated that vaccinating an entire city in response to a smallpox attack would save thousands more lives than would quarantining infected people and vaccinating their contacts (162: 21).

**Mammograms on trial** New controversy about old data had physicians, women, and policy analysts struggling to decide whether mammography reduces deaths from breast cancer (161: 264).

**Targeted therapies** Tailoring prescriptions according to a person's genes may help reduce side effects and enable doctors to deliver more personalized medicine (162: 171\*). Another approach to individualizing therapy is to monitor molecular and cellular changes in cancer cells as people respond to cancer therapies (161: 139).

**Healing hormone** A hormone called erythropoietin, long used to treat anemia, also seems to protect against nerve damage and holds promise as a new therapy for stroke and spinal cord injury (162: 296).

**Acetaminophen action** The discovery of an enzyme that scientists are calling cyclooxygenase-3, which is disabled by acetaminophen, might explain why this over-the-counter drug can stop pain and fever but not inflammation (162: 180). Another study showed that women who take acetaminophen or ibuprofen for headaches boost their chances of developing high blood pressure (162: 278).

### STAND UP FOR SCIENCE

Understanding the dizziness that astronauts often feel after space flight may help explain orthostatic intolerance, a disorder in which patients get faint or dizzy while standing. Here, one astronaut monitors a test in which another astronaut (foreground, beneath tubes) lies in a device that produces negative pressure on the lower half of his body, mimicking the effects of gravity on blood flow. (161: 376).



**Activating AIDS** New studies suggested that a natural alerting of immune cells to foreign invaders could explain why infection with HIV progresses to AIDS more quickly in some people than in others (161: 360).

**Diabetes drug** A drug fashioned from a mouse antibody halted the progression of diabetes in children and young adults newly diagnosed with the disease (161: 339\*).

**Chill out** Icing down patients whose hearts had stopped boosted their chances of survival and prevent brain damage (161: 115).

**Resistant bacteria** Viruses that destroy bacteria protected mice from antibiotic-resistant bacteria (161: 23).

**Fat chance** Research showed that drugs being tested against cancer because they thwart new blood vessel growth might also be a treatment for obesity (162: 67\*).

**MS cause?** A decade-long study bolstered the link between the Epstein-Barr virus and multiple sclerosis by showing that the common infection is more active in people who later develop the nerve disease (161: 4).

**Firefighter health** Relatively few of the New York firefighters involved in rescue and recovery after the terrorist attack on Sept. 11, 2001 developed chronic coughs and respiratory problems, but among those who did, the problems seem unusually severe (162: 222).

**Nerve signals** A study showed that Parkinson's disease damages nerve endings in the heart, kidneys, and thyroid gland, which may explain dizziness and fainting in people with this neuromuscular disease (161: 293). In a lab test, alcohol made some pain-generating nerves trigger more easily than normal (161: 294).

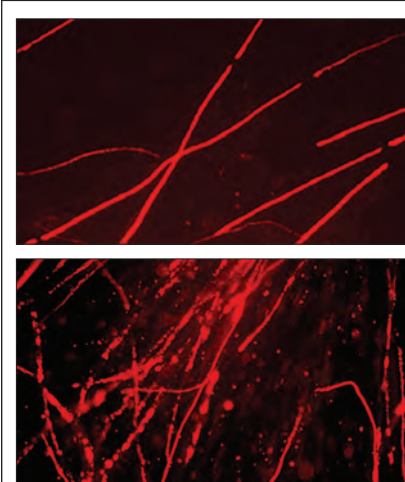
**Breathe deeply** Ten years after the discovery of the gene that, when mutated, causes cystic fibrosis, researchers still strug-

gled to understand why deadly lung infections are so common in people with the disease (161: 59).

**Slim pickings** A new compound mimicked the effects of an extremely low-calorie diet and lowered the incidence of diabetes and heart disease in monkeys (161: 77). Severely restricting their calorie consumption kept some dogs living about 22 months longer than nondieting canines (161: 291).

**Snooze and lose?** Sleeping 8 to 10 hours a night doesn't necessarily translate into a longer life (161: 173). However, new evidence suggested that chronic lack of sleep might be as damaging as poor nutrition and physical inactivity in the development of chronic illnesses such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease (162: 152\*).

**In silico medicine** To design better drugs and medical care, researchers are increasingly turning to computer simulations of patients and treatments (162: 378\*).



New images revealed that the bacterium that causes leprosy directly attacks the fatty sheath that coats healthy nerve fibers (top), leaving them irreversibly damaged (bottom) (161: 365).

# SCIENCE NEWS

## Of the year

**Biking problem** Men who maintained grueling mountain bicycling programs were apt to have lower sperm counts and more testicular damage than nonbikers were (162: 355\*).

**Risky genes** Researchers found genes linked to prostate cancer (161: 51\*; 162: 205), aggressive breast cancers (161: 68; 161: 259), and lung cancer (161: 254). They also found a mutation that can predispose women to uterine growths called fibroids (161: 149).

**Gross medicine** Research on probiotic bacteria—living microbes that confer health benefits when intentionally introduced into the body—offered growing medical promise (161: 72\*).

**Kiss and tell** A kiss can trigger allergic reactions to molecules carried on a person's lips (162: 40\*).

**Help against herpes** Scientists identified a new class of compounds that stops herpes simplex virus from replicating (161: 227\*).

**Smoke and SIDS** Nicotine impairs a molecule that's necessary for arousing people and other animals from sleep, an effect that could account for the heightened risk of sudden infant death syndrome in babies born to women who smoked during pregnancy (162: 163).

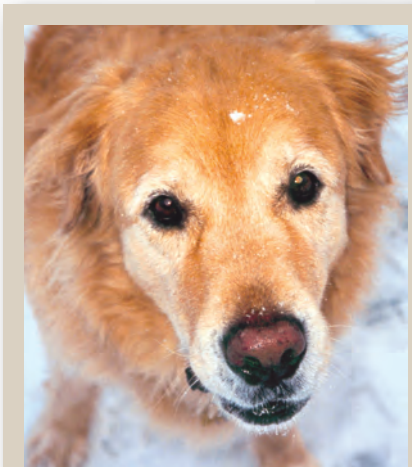
**Salty story** Researchers found that babies who tolerate a salty flavor have higher blood pressure on average than do their less tolerant counterparts (162: 101).

## Botany & Zoology

**Mad deer disease?** A wildlife brain ailment, once limited to a small part of the West and some game farms, turned up in wild deer in new areas, such as Wisconsin (162: 346\*).

**Upside way down** The first video of the deep-ocean dwellers called whipnose anglerfish showed that scientists have had it wrong and the fish actually swim "upside down" (162: 262).

**Species splits** Researchers found that a walking stick insect may be evolving into two species by adapting to different envi-



### DOG WORLD

Genetic studies suggested that people domesticated dogs in East Asia and brought them along when first venturing into the Americas (162: 324\*). Other tests indicated that dogs have an innate sensitivity to humans' body language as a legacy of domestication (162: 324\*).

ronments (161: 350), and reef corals that spawn in great, churning, multispecies soups may be maintaining diversity because hybrids are nearly sterile (161: 374).

**Lamprey allure** An unusual sex attractant—male bile acid—turned up in an analysis of sea lampreys, and it may inspire new ways to defend the Great Lakes against this invasive species (61: 213).

**Altruistic sperm** Microscopy revealed that the sperm of wood mice hook together by the thousands to form high-speed teams racing toward an egg, even though only one of each pack can win the prize (162: 20).

**Glow-in-the-dark bird** A budgerigar's head literally fluoresces, and both males and females prefer to court partners with a glow, a study found (161: 40).

**Ant peace and war** The largest ant supercolony yet found stretched in a network of cooperating nests from Italy to the Atlantic (161: 245).

**Gecko toes** Scientists pinned down the molecular basis of the gecko's prowess at scampering up polished walls and hanging from ceilings (162: 133).

**Cryptic invasion** A mild-mannered reed native to the United States was found innocent; it was being blamed for the environmental damage caused by an evil twin from abroad (161: 118).

**Bleeding trees** A microbe related to the one that caused the Irish potato famine was tentatively identified as the long-sought culprit killing majestic beech trees in the northeastern United States (162: 70).

## Cell & Molecular Biology

**Malaria milestones** Biologists deciphered the DNA sequences of a key malaria-causing parasite and of the mosquito that usually carries it, findings that suggest new ways to combat the deadly disease (162: 211\*).

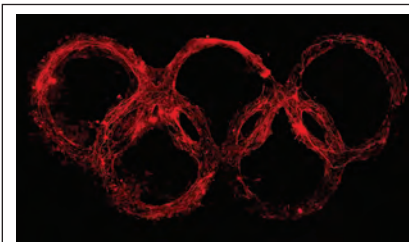
**Hunger hormone** The stomach makes a hormone called ghrelin that, in the brain, triggers hunger. Dieting, gastric-bypass surgery, and genetic mutations appeared to disturb the hormone's production (161: 107\*, 366; 162: 14).

**Rice twice** Two research groups independently described the entire genetic sequence of rice, a first for a crop plant (161: 211\*).

**Cloning consensus** A national advisory panel recommended outlawing cloning aimed at creating a child but suggested allowing medical experiments with cloned human cells (161: 52).

**Stem cell stir** Generating controversy over the potential of similar work in people, scientists showed that stem cells derived from cloned mouse and cow embryos can cure some animal diseases and create organs such as kidneys (161: 163\*, 356\*). Offering an alternative source for similar human cells, researchers showed that bone marrow from adults contains cells that can mature into many specialized types (161: 390).

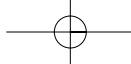
**Monkey business** Scientists obtained long-lived stem cells from monkey eggs stimulated to develop without being fertilized by sperm (161: 94).



Showing off a growing ability to guide the growth of lab-grown tissues, Salt Lake City scientists created this image of the Olympic rings from live nerve cells (161: 61).

E. ROELL; UNIVERSITY OF UTAH





**Viral threat** Stoking bioterrorism fears, scientists proved they could build the poliovirus from scratch, using the widely known genetic sequence and available chemicals (162: 22).

**RNA world** An unexpectedly large number of genes encode RNA strands instead of proteins (161: 24\*). Scientists started using short RNA strands to inhibit viruses and cancer growth (162: 93, 189).

**Small wonder** A microbe plucked from a volcanically heated ocean bed has the smallest number of genes of any living organism studied (161: 275).

**Sleepy head** Two common general anesthetics produce their sedative effects by triggering the brain's natural sleep circuits (162: 132\*).

**Gender gap** Parasites infect male mammals more often than females, possibly contributing to the tendency for male mammals to die earlier than females (162: 182).

**Spark of life** Biologists identified the enzyme in mammalian sperm that triggers development of a fertilized egg (162: 189) and found that sperm contain an unexpected payload of RNA (162: 216).

**Longevity gene** Variations in a gene called *klotho* may influence the length of a person's life (161: 36\*).

**Musled out** A study in worms suggested that during aging, the nervous system stays intact but muscles degenerate (162: 260).

## Chemistry

**Hydrogen generation** Researchers experimented with more sustainable ways to generate hydrogen, which burns cleanly but is typically made from fossil fuel (162: 235\*).

**Self-sutures** Surgical sutures made from a new biodegradable material tie themselves into a knot and tighten as the material warms to body temperature (161: 262).

**Nanotech concerns** Scientists explored nanomaterials' possible negative consequences in the human body and the environment (161: 200\*).

**Better batteries** A new material could make rechargeable lithium-ion batteries smaller, cheaper, and safer (162: 196\*).

## STEEL COLOSSUS

Unlike the stainless steel that caps New York's Chrysler Building, cheap grades of the rust-resistant alloy are prone to pit corrosion, in which small spots on the metal's surface erode at accelerated rates. British researchers who analyzed various grades of stainless steel discovered that pit corrosion results from a dearth of chromium in the material that surrounds sulfide-rich inclusions in the metal (161: 99\*).



**Money allergies** Some of the new two-alloy European Union coins release large amounts of nickel, a common skin irritant (162: 163\*).

**Viral parts** Researchers transformed viruses into potential building blocks for electronic circuits and tools for biomedical therapies (161: 68).

**Minimotor** A single molecule performed mechanical work—pulling and releasing a cantilever tip—when exposed to light (161: 292).

**Macro costs** A new analysis revealed that the production of a single 2-gram microchip requires nearly 2 kilograms of chemicals and fossil fuels (162: 309).

**Questions of origin** Two studies of inks and paper renewed controversy about the authenticity of a map that some scholars claim is the first depiction of North America (162: 109).

**Mimicking nature's binders** A new technique made artificial receptors that differentiate among molecules that are similar to each other (162: 53).

**Icy birth** Two experiments simulating the environment of interstellar space produced amino acids, the building blocks of proteins (161: 195\*).

**Molecular sorting** A novel modification of polymer membranes gave researchers a means to tune certain filters to be more selective yet faster (161: 245). Other experiments suggested that a new membrane would make it easier to separate mixtures of the right-hand and left-hand versions of drug molecules (161: 388). A recently devised, metal-laced organic solid proved that it can act as a sieve for nanosize molecules (162: 213).

## Earth Science

**September's science** Weather data gathered during the 3-day shutdown of com-

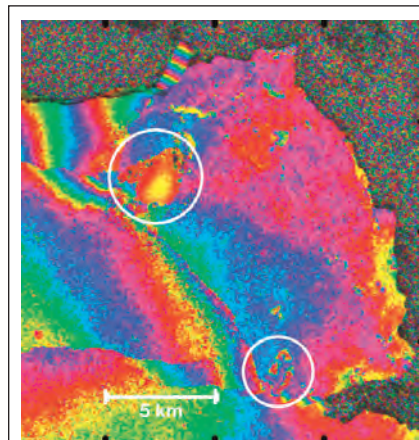
mercial aviation within the United States after Sept. 11, 2001, suggest that the contrails from high-flying jets have a significant effect on Earth's climate (161: 291\*).

**It's baaaack** Early in the year, scientists analyzed rainfall patterns in the Indian Ocean and predicted the late-summer return of El Niño, the worldwide weather maker marked by sea-surface warming in the tropical Pacific (161: 142). In July, NOAA researchers confirmed the phenomenon's arrival (162: 110).

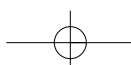
**Outside-in** A fresh look at old experimental data suggests that water droplets in clouds freeze from their surface inward, a finding that would overturn a theory in place for more than 6 decades. (162: 340\*)

**Bottoms up** Seafloor sediments suggest that the plankton-nourishing iron that's in surface waters surrounding Antarctica comes from upwelling deepwater currents, not from dust blowing off the continents (161: 6).

**Cracked ice** A Rhode Island-size section of the Antarctic's Larsen B ice shelf splintered into thousands of icebergs in a mere



Researchers analyzing satellite images of a remote island (large circle) off the northeastern coast of Greenland stumbled upon an undiscovered group of nearby small islands (small circle) (161: 222).



# SCIENCE NEWS

## Of the year

5-week period during the area's warmest summer on record (161: 197).

**Demo job** An analysis of trace elements in meteorites suggested that most of the heavenly objects that rained hell on the inner solar system about 3.9 billion years ago were asteroids, not comets (161: 147).

**Global impact** Sediments laid down on Earth about 3.47 billion years ago contain remnants of what may have been an extraterrestrial object large enough to disperse collision debris over the entire planet (162: 115).

**Twister risk** A new model found that the bull's-eye in Tornado Alley lies over southeastern Oklahoma, where any particular spot can expect to get damaged once every 4,000 years (161: 296\*). As of Aug. 1, barely half the usual number of tornadoes had struck the lower 48 U.S. states (162: 125).

**Deep sea** Analysis of lab-made minerals suggested that the zone of rocks just outside Earth's core could hold enough water to fill the oceans five times (161: 205).

**Ice museum** Super-concentrated salt water at the bottom of Antarctica's Lake Vida has been sealed off from the world for at least 2,800 years and may support life (162: 387).

**Both sides now** Scientists can map the size and distribution of ice particles in a cirrus cloud by combining simultaneous observations from satellites and ground-based instruments (161: 342).

**Paved paradise** Rose Garden, one of the first undersea hydrothermal vents to be discovered nearly 25 years ago near the Galápagos Islands, may have been covered by a recent volcanic eruption (161: 382).

**Tiny signs** Mangled microfossils may become a new diagnostic tool for identifying the sites of ancient, hidden extraterrestrial-object impacts (161: 382).

**Jelly alert** Scientists refined a technique for calculating the probability of encountering stinging jellyfish in Chesapeake Bay (162: 52).

**Storm warning** Data from Arabian Sea sediments suggest that Asian monsoons

### A FINE MAP

Defense Department mapmakers and NASA scientists are assembling billions of radar measurements made from the space shuttle Endeavour to produce what will be the world's best topographic map (161: 126).



have been intensifying over the past 400 years, and scientists predict that these storms are slated to get worse (162: 54\*).

## Environment & Ecology

**Frog woes** At water concentrations found in the environment, the weed killer atrazine stripped male frogs of their masculinity, suggesting that the chemical is partly responsible for global amphibian declines (161: 243\*; 162: 275\*).

**Troubled waters** Several dozen organic contaminants were quantified in U.S. streams, and the chemicals' combined effects may be killing aquatic organisms (161: 181).

**Fish beware** *Pfiesteria* microbes, implicated in fish kills and human illness along the mid-Atlantic U.S. coast, turned up in Norway (161: 39). Another study suggested that some types of *Pfiesteria* don't produce a toxin but kill by eating holes in a fish's skin (162: 84).

**Polluting seas** Chemical analyses of seawater provided the first direct evidence that the ocean may be a significant source of atmospheric gases—alkyl nitrates—that scientists had assumed trace mainly to industrial activity (162: 102).

**Legal steroids** Farm-field runoff containing hormones excreted by steroid-treated livestock appeared capable of harming aquatic life (161: 10\*).

**Light blight** Researchers found reason to suspect that artificial lighting at night disrupts the physiology and behavior of nocturnal animals (161: 248\*).

**Teenage hold up** A study of adolescents suggested that widespread environmental pollutants, such as polychlorinated biphenyls and dioxins, might be delaying young people's sexual development (162: 3).

**Tougher weeds** Tests on sunflowers showed that a lab-engineered gene from a

crop plant, if introduced into its wild relative, can give the native plant a survival edge over other wild plants (162: 99\*).

**Wasteful harvest** New research and policy developments aimed to curb the practice of killing sharks solely for their fins, an Asian delicacy (162: 232\*).

**Drugs afield** Researchers found that antibiotics excreted by people and animals have the potential to poison plants and end up in food (161: 406\*).

**Clay slays** Scientists experimented with sprays of dirt particles to kill toxic algae in seawater (162: 344).

**Mercurial foliage** A study discovered that fallen leaves that collect in stagnant water can release toxic mercury, which can eventually accumulate in fish far downstream (161: 148).

**Embryonic losses** Minuscule amounts of over-the-counter weed killers impaired reproduction in mice (162: 228).

**Dioxin's new target** Scientists found indications that dioxin, a hormonelike pollu-



### FIRE D UP

Set alight by wildfires, thick beds of decaying tropical-plant matter can spew massive amounts of carbon, which researchers calculated could rival global emissions from fossil fuels (162: 291\*).



tant, can trigger breast cancer in heavily exposed women (162: 77).

**Killer cocktails** Trace amounts of human-excreted drugs in waterways appeared to work together to deform and kill native microscopic organisms (162: 101).

**Smoking gun** Living with a smoker at least doubled a cat's risk of developing the feline analog of the cancer non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (162: 125).

**Cold war** Algae fight over nutrients, and one Swedish combatant under frozen lakes apparently prevails by poisoning its adversaries (161: 61).

**Pollution magnet** Atmospheric scientists learned that the Mediterranean Sea is a crossroads for pollution-laden air currents from Europe, Asia, and North America (162: 261).

## Food Science & Nutrition

**Vegetarians' vitamins** Vegetarians' low intake of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> may cause an overabundance of the amino acid homocysteine and thus increase their risk of heart disease (161: 100).

**Cancer-fighting folate** Even a little supplemental folate during a mother's pregnancy appeared to reduce the risk that her child will develop acute lymphoblastic leukemia (161: 8). Dietary folate also helped avert colon cancer in women (161: 253).

**Wholesome grains** Diets rich in whole rather than processed grains may help protect overweight people from diabetes and heart disease by improving their management of blood sugar concentrations (161: 308).

**Fat of the sea** A diet containing fish oil that's rich in omega-3 fatty acid cut inflammation of the colon in rats, so it might benefit people with colitis (161: 53).

**To life!** People fighting high blood pressure benefited from drinking cocoa (161: 142) and red wine (161: 8), thanks to the actions of plant polyphenols, which both beverages contain in abundance.

**Big red** Lycopene, which makes tomatoes red and in people's diets might help guard against prostate cancer, was found more abundant in watermelons than in tomatoes (162: 29).



**The discovery that cooking and frying laces starchy foods with the animal carcinogen acrylamide (161: 277) launched an international effort to investigate how the poison forms (162: 120) and whether people's current exposures pose risks (162: 213\*).**

**Not too sweet** Honey can contain traces of potent liver-damaging compounds produced naturally by many flowering plants (161: 317).

**Soy excess** Large doses of the estrogen-like hormones in soybeans and soy-based infant formulas weakened the immune systems of mice (161: 325\*).

**Corn conundrum** Although cooking sweet corn reduced its concentration of the antioxidant vitamin C, the process increases corn's overall disease-fighting antioxidant activity (162: 141).

**A twist** Moderate alcohol consumption appeared to reduce a drinker's risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and other forms of age-related dementia (161: 67\*).

**Stomach stalker** A chemical abundant in broccoli killed ulcer-causing *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria in the laboratory and inhibited stomach cancer in mice (161: 340).

**Garlic and HIV** Garlic supplements interfered with one of the drugs people take to fight an HIV infection (161: 8).

## Mathematics & Computers

**Prime pursuit** A novel approach for identifying prime numbers provided a long-sought improvement in the theoretical efficiency of algorithms for that task (162: 266\*).

**Powerful proof** A mathematician proved Catalan's conjecture, a venerable problem in number theory concerning relationships among powers of whole numbers (161: 324).

**Guessing secrets** Analyzing a variant of the familiar game of 20 questions offered insights into Internet communication (161: 216\*).

**Filling in blanks** Researchers developed speedy automated methods, based on differential equations, to repair or modify digital images (161: 299\*).

**Block logic** Analyses of sliding-block puzzles led to a novel theoretical model of computer logic (162: 106\*).

**Molecular factoring** For the first time, a simple, molecule-based quantum computer carried out Shor's algorithm for factoring a whole number (161: 31).

**Nuclear blast** In a classified U.S.-government experiment, what was then the world's fastest computer simulated a thermonuclear blast in three dimensions (161: 189).

**Big bucks** A government report estimated that software errors in industrial computer programs cost the United States about \$60 billion per year (162: 45).

**Peer pressure** Researchers used a mathematical model of peer-influenced behavior to explain unexpected patterns in financial data and bird populations (162: 116).

**Gaze control** Researchers introduced a new method for gaze-operated, hands-free text entry that's faster and more accurate than using an on-screen keyboard (162: 141).

## Paleobiology

**Veggie bites** Fossil remains of a creature that had rodentlike incisors and a hefty overbite provided the first distinct dental evidence for plant-eating habits among theropod dinosaurs (162: 179\*).

**No Olympian** A biomechanical analysis of *Tyrannosaurus rex* hinted that the creature ran only slowly, if at all (161: 131\*).

**Moist heat** Fossil leaves unearthed in central Colorado suggested that the region contained one of the world's first tropical rain forests just 1.4 million years after the demise of the dinosaurs (161: 403\*).

**Gap-filler** A fossil originally misidentified as an ancient fish turned out to be the nearly intact remains of a four-limbed creature that lived during a period that left few fossils of land animals (162: 5).

# SCIENCE NEWS

## Of the year



**Leonardo, a mummified dinosaur unearthed in Montana, gave scientists a rare peek at what the creature's muscles, beak, skin, and other soft tissues may have looked like (162: 243\*).**

**Swoop-n-scoop** Fossils unearthed in Brazil strengthened the notion that some species of ancient flying reptiles swooped low over the water's surface and snapped up fish (162: 35).

**Only traces** Scientists found the birdlike footprints of a yet undiscovered creature in rocks more than 60 million years older than *Archaeopteryx*, the first bird to leave fossil remains (162: 62).

**Say cheese** Paleontologists unearthed fossils of a tiny, duck-billed crocodile that boasted a smile like no other: The animal had no front teeth (161: 142).

**Marine mamas** Newly discovered fossils of aquatic reptiles known as mosasaurs suggested that the creatures gave birth in mid-ocean rather than in near-shore sanctuaries, as previously suspected (162: 270).

**On the go** Scientists said that a sediment-

### SLOW WINNERS

To make the first antimatter atoms that move slowly enough to be studied, physicists combined ultracold antiprotons and antielectrons into atoms of antihydrogen. Such atoms annihilate (right) when they hit ordinary matter (162: 286). Researchers also took a first, cursory peek inside antihydrogen and found matter and antimatter to be fundamentally alike, as expected (162: 399).

filled, bathtub-shape depression at one of North America's largest dinosaur trackway sites is the first recognized evidence of dinosaur urination (162: 270).

## Physics

**Quick-change artists** Observations of ghostly neutrinos from the sun and from nuclear-power reactors suggested that all neutrino types violate the prevailing theory of particle physics by frequently changing their identities (161: 301; 162: 371).

**Wiring atoms** Scientists demonstrated transistor action by a single atom (162: 88\*).

**Muon-go-round** A deviation from theoretical predictions of the magnetic strengths of subatomic muons hinted at an undiscovered realm of elementary particles (162: 158).

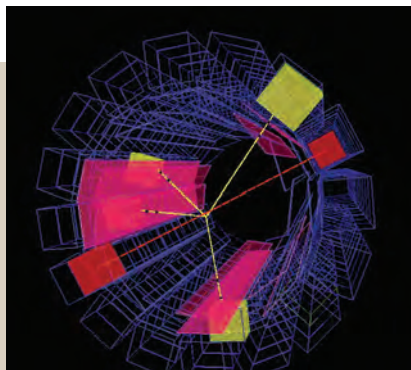
**Yin yang** Electron bombardment of neutrons revealed that the nominally neutral particles contain regions of positive and negative charge (161: 262).

**All in the family** Exotic cousins of protons and neutrons known as doubly charmed baryons made their laboratory debut (162: 14).

**False physics** Two prominent physicists lost their jobs following allegations that they had fabricated data in landmark experiments (162: 37, 214).

**Wee black holes** Theorists proposed that ultradense specks of matter—microscopic black holes—might fleetingly appear in Earth's atmosphere and in a powerful particle accelerator soon to be built (161: 187\*).

**Bubble power** In a controversial claim, researchers presented evidence of nuclear fusion in bubbles imploding in a liquid bombarded by sound waves (161: 147\*). Other



scientists reported that a cooling process in such bubbles makes fusion unlikely (162: 125).

**Bright palette** Researchers unveiled a novel microchip that's a laser that emits a band of infrared light rather than the single, pure wavelength of a typical laser (161: 115\*).

**Hard to beat** In ultrahigh-compression experiments, the rare metal osmium outperformed diamond for sturdiness (161: 211\*). Meanwhile, scientists continued to improve synthetic diamonds (162: 165\*).

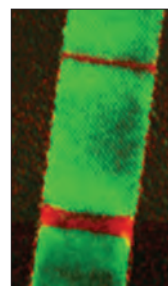
## Technology

**Pocket power** For cell phones and other portable electronics, researchers field-tested prototypes of tiny, refillable fuel cells expected to last much longer than today's batteries (162: 155\*).

**Biomed structures** Chemists synthesized new gelatinous and rubbery polymers that may serve as superior dressings for wounds (162: 20) and as scaffolds for artificial organs and tissues (161: 323, 408; 162: 93).

**Attractively cool** A compact cooler incorporating a permanent magnet showed that it could give rise to household refrigerators and air conditioners that depend on magnetism instead of volatile liquids (161: 4\*).

Scientists unveiled new building blocks for ultrasmall electronic circuits including striped nanowires (right), embossed silicon, and welded nanotubes (161: 83\*, 390\*; 162: 222) and a novel magnetic microcircuit (161: 373).



**Microplumbing** Researchers packed thousands of microscopic pipes and chambers onto fluid-manipulating microchips of unprecedented power (162: 198).

**Hot cross beams** Novel microstructures of crisscrossed tungsten rods filtered various wavelengths of radiated heat—a talent that someday might boost the efficiency of lightbulbs (161: 334).

**Billowy billboards?** An electronic display capped by a transparent polymer membrane applied as a liquid and then solidified may be a step toward paint-on displays for walls and fabrics (161: 349).



# Science News Index

Vol. 162, Nos. 1–26, July–December 2002, pp. 1–416

## A

- Abbot, Patrick . . . . . 8  
 Abel, Tom . . . . . 278  
 Abrams, Jeffrey S. . . . . 243  
 Acetaminophen . . . . . 85, 180, 278  
 Acetylcholine . . . . . 163  
 Acoustic monitoring . . . . . 362  
 Acoustics . . . . . 358  
 Acrylamide . . . . . 6, 120, 213  
 Actin . . . . . 158  
 Adams, Eldridge S. . . . . 373  
 Adaptive optics . . . . . 141  
 Addiction . . . . . 334, 340  
 Adducts . . . . . 120  
 Adhesives . . . . . 133  
 Adolphs, Ralph . . . . . 309  
 Aerodynamics . . . . . 46, 86  
 Aerosols . . . . . 360, 372  
 Africa . . . . . 90  
 Aging . . . . . 53, 260  
 Agrawal, Manindra . . . . . 266  
 AIDS . . . . . 26, 149, 318  
 Aiello, Vera Demarchi . . . . . 62  
 Air pollution . . . . . 261, 302  
 Air quality . . . . . 372  
 Airfoils . . . . . 86  
 Ajayan, Pulickel M. . . . . 221, 357  
 Albers, Donald J. . . . . 392  
 Alcock, John . . . . . 293  
 Algae . . . . . 84, 344  
 Alkyl nitrates . . . . . 102  
 Allen, Philip A. . . . . 246  
 Allergies . . . . . 40, 150, 157, 163, 204, 350  
 Alley, William M. . . . . 42  
 Alloys . . . . . 117, 200  
 Altruism . . . . . 20, 277  
 Alty, James L. . . . . 339  
 Alzheimer's disease . . . . . 126  
 American Indians . . . . . 190  
 Americas, early civilizations . . . . . 190, 237, 259  
 Amino acids . . . . . 213  
 Amphibians . . . . . 19, 275  
 Amphioxus . . . . . 294  
 Amusia/dysmusia . . . . . 334  
 Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis . . . . . 26, 205  
 Anasazi . . . . . 174  
 Ankar, Eva . . . . . 91  
 Anderson, Carl M. . . . . 227  
 Anderson, David M. . . . . 54, 104  
 Anderson, Donald M. . . . . 345  
 Andrews, Rodney . . . . . 219  
 Androgens . . . . . 157  
 Anesthesia . . . . . 132  
 Angina . . . . . 365  
 Angiogenesis . . . . . 67, 69  
 Antarctica . . . . . 387  
 Anthocyanins . . . . . 264  
 Anthrax . . . . . 115, 142, 372  
 Antibodies . . . . . 53, 86  
 Antihormones . . . . . 302  
 Antimatter . . . . . 10, 286, 399  
 Antimicrobials . . . . . 134  
 Antineutrinos . . . . . 371  
 Antioxidants . . . . . 46, 141  
 Antisense . . . . . 100  
 Antisocial personality disorder . . . . . 68  
 Ants . . . . . 147, 285, 388  
 Anxiety . . . . . 212  
 Aoki, Shigeyuki . . . . . 8  
 Apes . . . . . 328  
 Apoptosis . . . . . 202, 229, 238, 296  
 Appetite . . . . . 83  
 Aquifers . . . . . 42  
 Arachidonic acid . . . . . 180  
 Arbuscles . . . . . 197  
 Archaeopteryx . . . . . 62  
 Archaeoraptor . . . . . 349  
 Archer, David . . . . . 104  
 Argenziano, Michael . . . . . 365  
 Arrington, D. Albrey . . . . . 173  
 Arsenic . . . . . 325  
 Art . . . . . 109, 181  
 Artificial life . . . . . 22  
 Artutanov, Yuri . . . . . 219  
 Aslin, Richard N. . . . . 293  
 Asparagine . . . . . 213  
 Asterooids . . . . . 323  
 Asthma . . . . . 61, 150, 157, 204, 302, 378  
 Atlas, Elliot . . . . . 102  
 Atmospheric chemistry . . . . . 84, 102, 253, 360  
 Atrazine . . . . . 275, 302  
 Attention deficit disorder . . . . . 227  
 Augustine, Matthew . . . . . 150  
 Automobiles . . . . . 61, 93  
 Autumn, Kellar . . . . . 133  
 Avignone III, Frank T. . . . . 10  
 Aw, Michael . . . . . 232
- ## B
- B cells . . . . . 75  
 Babcock, Robert G. . . . . 109  
*Bacillus thuringiensis* . . . . . 99, 166  
 Backer, Donald C. . . . . 69  
 Bacteria . . . . . 72, 110, 326  
 Bacteriophages . . . . . 115  
 Bado, Philippe, Bado . . . . . 316  
 Baker, David . . . . . 291  
 Baker, Timothy B. . . . . 341  
 Ball, Karlene . . . . . 307  
 Banavar, Jayanth R. . . . . 116  
 Barker, Stephen . . . . . 105  
 Baron-Cohen, Simon . . . . . 4  
 Baryons . . . . . 14  
 Barzilay, Joshua . . . . . 136  
 Basile, Anthony . . . . . 334  
 Basler, Christopher . . . . . 196  
 Bassingthwaighe, James B. . . . . 378  
 Batlogg, Bertram . . . . . 214  
 Bats . . . . . 56  
 Batteries . . . . . 155, 196  
 Bauer, Thorsten . . . . . 316  
 Baughman, Ray . . . . . 3, 357  
 Baum, Eric B. . . . . 106  
 Baumeister, Alan A. . . . . 227  
 Baumrind, Diana . . . . . 77  
 Bawden, Gerald W. . . . . 43  
 Beachy, Philip A. . . . . 132  
 Beall, Cynthia M. . . . . 399  
 Beattie, Gillian . . . . . 45  
 Beauchamp, Michael S. . . . . 276  
 Becker, Keir . . . . . 363  
 Beerling, David J. . . . . 30  
 Beers, Timothy C. . . . . 278  
 Belay, Ermias . . . . . 348  
 Belemites . . . . . 122  
 Benedict, G. Fritz . . . . . 357  
 Benowitz, Larry I. . . . . 238  
 Bentley, Charles R. . . . . 388  
 Benton, Tim . . . . . 9  
 Beral, Valerie . . . . . 93  
 Bereavement . . . . . 157  
 Berenbaum, May R. . . . . 246  
 Berman, David M. . . . . 132  
 Bernath, Peter F. . . . . 85  
 Bernstein, Irwin D. . . . . 262  
 Bernstein, Rebecca A. . . . . 377  
 Bertone, Elizabeth R. . . . . 125  
 Beyer, Gudrun . . . . . 350  
 Bicknell, William J. . . . . 21  
 Bicycles . . . . . 355  
 Bidartondo, Martin . . . . . 197  
 Bildsten, Lars . . . . . 292  
 Bilirubin . . . . . 381  
 Binzel, Richard P. . . . . 269  
 Biological clock . . . . . 110  
 Biological controls . . . . . 94  
 Biological warfare . . . . . 86  
 Biomaterials . . . . . 13  
 Biomedicine . . . . . 26  
 Bioterrorism . . . . . 21, 22, 115, 196  
 Bipolar disorder . . . . . 195  
 Birds . . . . . 158, 168, 230, 237, 373  
 Birth control. See Contraception  
 Black holes . . . . . 68, 68, 180, 299, 301, 339  
 Blaser, Martin J. . . . . 342  
 Blatteis, Clark M. . . . . 181  
 Blindness . . . . . 238  
 Blithe, Diana . . . . . 374  
 Bloch, Jonathan I. . . . . 399  
 Block, Eric . . . . . 244  
 Blomgren, George . . . . . 197  
 Blood . . . . . 61, 67, 69, 197, 221, 261  
 Bloom, Stephen R. . . . . 83  
 Body fat . . . . . 67  
 Boeing, Heiner . . . . . 137  
 Bohlen, Patrick J. . . . . 341  
 Bolskar, Robert . . . . . 27  
 Bonanno, George A. . . . . 157  
 Bones . . . . . 142, 230, 382  
 Bontrop, Ronald E. . . . . 149  
 Borda, Jean Charles . . . . . 280  
 Borna, Corina M. . . . . 75  
 Bosque, Patrick . . . . . 347  
 Boss, Alan P. . . . . 131, 358  
 Bottoms, Bette L. . . . . 60  
 Botulism . . . . . 86  
 Bouricuis, Terry . . . . . 281  
 Boyer, Doug M. . . . . 399  
 Brain . . . . . 38, 157, 180, 186, 227, 275, 285, 308, 312, 374, 382, 389  
 Brain, imaging . . . . . 4, 227, 251, 301  
 Brain-derived neurotrophic factor . . . . . 334  
 Brams, Steven . . . . . 280  
 Brandt, Alan E. . . . . 29  
 Branscomb, Lewis M. . . . . 69  
 Breastfeeding . . . . . 93  
 Breiling, Jim . . . . . 59  
 Brenner, Sydney . . . . . 229  
 Bricks . . . . . 110  
 Brierly, Richard . . . . . 150  
 Briggs, Adam P. . . . . 156  
 Brock, Jane . . . . . 184  
 Brod, Bruce A. . . . . 163  
 Brodd, Ralph . . . . . 197  
 Bronze Age . . . . . 61  
 Brookhaven National Laboratory . . . . . 158  
 Brown, Christopher W. . . . . 52  
 Brown, John P. . . . . 350  
 Brown, Katherine L. . . . . 109  
 Brown, Michael E. . . . . 228  
 Brown, Peter G. . . . . 323  
 Brown, Simon . . . . . 203  
 Brownian motion . . . . . 51  
 Brunet, Michel . . . . . 19, 253  
 Bshary, Redouan . . . . . 277  
 Bubbles . . . . . 125, 358  
 Buchholtz, Emily A. . . . . 122  
 Budney, Greg . . . . . 168  
 Buie, Marc W. . . . . 148  
 Bullock, James S. . . . . 245  
 Buphenyl . . . . . 141  
 Buratti, Bonnie J. . . . . 400  
 Burghardt, Gordon . . . . . 78  
 Burk, Robert D. . . . . 323  
 Burke, John M. . . . . 126  
 Burkholder, JoAnn . . . . . 84  
 Buriak, Jillian . . . . . 388  
 Burns . . . . . 20  
 Busch, Robert D. . . . . 259  
 Busha, Michael . . . . . 140  
 Butler, James E. . . . . 165  
 Butler, Rhett . . . . . 364  
 Butterflies . . . . . 125  
 Byerly, Gary R. . . . . 115
- ## C
- C-reactive protein . . . . . 364  
 Cacioppo, John T. . . . . 77  
*Caenorhabditis elegans* . . . . . 229, 254, 260  
 Cahill, Thomas . . . . . 109  
 Calcium . . . . . 189, 355  
 Calcium carbonate . . . . . 104  
 Caldwell, Chris K. . . . . 267  
 Callegari, Andrea . . . . . 84  
 Callstrom, Matthew R. . . . . 382  
 Calsbeck, Ryan . . . . . 293  
 Calstrom, John E. . . . . 195  
 Camels . . . . . 237  
 Cameras . . . . . 133, 382  
 Cancer . . . . . 45, 67, 179, 189  
 Cancer, bone . . . . . 382, 382  
 Cancer, brain . . . . . 131  
 Cancer, breast . . . . . 61, 77, 93, 243, 333  
 Cancer, cervical . . . . . 292, 323  
 Cancer, chemotherapy . . . . . 243, 309  
 Cancer, colon . . . . . 173  
 Cancer, diet . . . . . 6, 120  
 Cancer, eye . . . . . 238  
 Cancer, leukemia . . . . . 45, 261, 371  
 Cancer, lung . . . . . 333  
 Cancer, lymphoma . . . . . 75  
 Cancer, lymphomas . . . . . 125  
 Cancer, melanoma . . . . . 45, 309  
 Cancer, ovarian . . . . . 61  
 Cancer, prostate . . . . . 46, 173, 190, 205  
 Cancer, stomach . . . . . 341  
 Cancer, testicular . . . . . 355  
*Canis dirus* . . . . . 51  
 Cannibalism . . . . . 181  
 Caporael, Linda R. . . . . 187  
 Carbon . . . . . 253, 291, 286, 325  
 Carbon monoxide . . . . . 214  
 Carbon nanotubes . . . . . 357  
 Carcinogens . . . . . 120  
 Cardiovascular disease. See Heart Disease  
 Carlson, Jane Cummings . . . . . 94  
 Carlton, James T. . . . . 72, 73  
 Carman, Greg . . . . . 200  
 Carotenoids . . . . . 29  
 Carozza, Susan E. . . . . 180  
 Carpal tunnel syndrome . . . . . 205  
 Carrington, Mary . . . . . 150  
 Carroll, Robert L. . . . . 5  
 Carter, Stephen D. . . . . 358  
 Cartilage . . . . . 13  
 Caspi, Avshalom . . . . . 68  
 Cassini mission . . . . . 364  
 Castellanos, F. Xavier . . . . . 227  
 Castillejo, Marta . . . . . 181  
 Castleman Jr., A. Welford . . . . . 269  
 Catalysts . . . . . 61, 93, 213  
 Catalytic converters . . . . . 61, 93  
 Cats . . . . . 125  
 Cavitation . . . . . 125, 358  
 CD4 cells . . . . . 318  
 CD8 cells . . . . . 318  
 Celedon, Juan C. . . . . 204  
 Cell phones . . . . . 155, 318  
 Cellulose . . . . . 72  
 Cen, Renyue P. . . . . 83  
 Centaurus A . . . . . 102, 349  
 Cerami, Anthony . . . . . 296  
 Cerebral cortex . . . . . 312  
 Chagas disease . . . . . 62  
 Chaikin, Paul M. . . . . 149  
 Chakrabarty, Deepto . . . . . 24  
 Chalker-Scott, Linda . . . . . 265  
 Chandra X-ray Observatory . . . . . 83, 102, 339, 342  
 Chandrasekar, Srinivasan . . . . . 117  
 Changeux, Jean-Pierre . . . . . 163  
 Chaos . . . . . 280, 392  
 Chelsey, John . . . . . 204  
 Chemical vapor deposition . . . . . 165  
 Cheng, Zhengdong . . . . . 149  
 Chesapeake Bay . . . . . 52  
 Chestnut blight . . . . . 94  
 Cheung, Harry W.K. . . . . 14  
 Chiang, Yet-Ming . . . . . 196  
 Chickens . . . . . 230  
 Chien, Kenneth . . . . . 54  
 Child abuse . . . . . 59, 68, 77  
 Child development . . . . . 293, 301  
 Childhood diseases . . . . . 179  
 Chimpanzees . . . . . 19, 149  
 China . . . . . 253, 387  
 Chinn, Kenneth S.K. . . . . 373  
 Chlamydia . . . . . 36  
 Chocolate . . . . . 38  
 Choi, Hyoung Joon . . . . . 158  
 Chopra, Harsh D. . . . . 5  
 Chordates . . . . . 294  
 Chornet, Esteban . . . . . 235  
 Christiansen, Eric L. . . . . 318  
 Christlieb, Norbert . . . . . 278  
 Chronic wasting disease . . . . . 346  
 Circadian rhythms . . . . . 110  
 Clack, Jennifer A. . . . . 5  
 Clark, Elizabeth . . . . . 105  
 Clark, Julia A. . . . . 349  
 Clark, Peter U. . . . . 283  
 Clark, Robin J.H. . . . . 109  
 Clarke, Arthur C. . . . . 219  
 Claws . . . . . 270  
 Clegg, Deborah J. . . . . 46  
 Clement, Steven D. . . . . 259  
 Clevidence, Beverly A. . . . . 29  
 Climate . . . . . 54, 84, 85, 164, 174, 248, 253, 259, 283, 349  
 Cloning . . . . . 216, 309  
 Clouds . . . . . 340  
 Cobalt . . . . . 325  
 Coccolithophores . . . . . 104  
 Cockroaches . . . . . 29  
 Coe, Michael D. . . . . 355  
 Coe, Steven E. . . . . 165  
 Coffee . . . . . 13  
 Cohen, Daniel . . . . . 195  
 Cohen, David E. . . . . 163

## INDEX COHEN – HELIOPAUSE

- Cohen, Ron . . . . . 298  
 Coins . . . . . 163  
 Cole, Daniel C. . . . . 286  
 Coleridge, Samuel . . . . . 42  
 Collins, Francis . . . . . 171  
 Colloids . . . . . 149  
 Comets . . . . . 69, 77, 116, 342  
 Communication . . . . . 78, 168,  
 . . . . . 173, 356  
 Complement proteins . . . . . 62  
 Compton, W. Dale . . . . . 117  
 Computers . . . . . 45, 117, 141,  
 . . . . . 266, 339, 378  
 Connors, Mark . . . . . 318, 318  
 Consciousness . . . . . 251  
 Conservation . . . . . 331  
 Contact lenses . . . . . 134  
 CONTOUR mission . . . . . 77  
 Contraception . . . . . 216, 245  
 Contrails . . . . . 400  
 Convention on Migratory  
 Species . . . . . 237  
 Conventional super  
 conductors . . . . . 158  
 Cook, Della C. . . . . 330  
 Cook, Edward R. . . . . 85  
 Cook, Lisa . . . . . 234  
 Cooper pairs . . . . . 325  
 Cooper, Peter S. . . . . 14  
 Copper . . . . . 61, 276, 302  
 Corals . . . . . 277  
 Corbel, Stephane . . . . . 299  
 Corbin, Michael R. . . . . 164  
 Corn . . . . . 141, 166  
 Corporal punishment . . . . . 77  
 Corry, David . . . . . 150  
 Cortisol . . . . . 237  
 Cosmetics . . . . . 36  
 Cosmic microwave  
 background . . . . . 195, 390  
 Cosmic rays . . . . . 301  
 Cottam, Jean . . . . . 292  
 Cotter, Robert . . . . . 245  
 Coughs . . . . . 221  
 Coulomb force . . . . . 315  
 Couzin, Iain D. . . . . 388  
 Cowan, Douglas B. . . . . 365  
 Cowen, Richard . . . . . 123  
 Cowie, Len L. . . . . 164  
 COX enzyme . . . . . 180  
 Cox, Brian . . . . . 46  
 Coyle, Joseph T. . . . . 196  
 CPT theorem . . . . . 286  
 Cramer, Elaine H. . . . . 389  
 Crandall, Richard E. . . . . 267  
 Craw, Patricia A. . . . . 307  
 Crawford, Lester M. . . . . 121  
 Crespi, Bernard . . . . . 9  
 Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease . . . . . 346  
 Criminals . . . . . 59, 68  
 Critical mass . . . . . 259  
 Crum, Lawrence A. . . . . 358  
 Cryptography . . . . . 221, 266  
 Crystals . . . . . 276  
 Cummings, David E. . . . . 14, 84  
 Cunefare, Kenneth A. . . . . 358  
 Cuoricino . . . . . 10  
 Curhan, Gary C. . . . . 278  
 Curran, Tom . . . . . 132  
 Currie, Philip . . . . . 179  
 Curtis, Maurice A. . . . . 334  
 Cyclopamine . . . . . 131  
 Cystic fibrosis . . . . . 141  
 Cytokines . . . . . 152  
 Czeisler, Charles . . . . . 110
- D**
- Dalcanton, Julianne J. . . . . 377  
 Dandona, Paresh . . . . . 137  
 Daphnia . . . . . 101  
 Dark energy . . . . . 139  
 Dark matter . . . . . 83
- Daughton, Christian . . . . . 101  
 Davis Jr., Raymond . . . . . 229  
 Davis, Earl E. . . . . 363  
 Davis, William P. . . . . 302  
 de Almeida Campos, Diogenes  
 . . . . . 35  
 de Heer, Walter . . . . . 3  
 de Lafuente, Victor . . . . . 374  
 de Pater, Imke . . . . . 326  
 Deafness . . . . . 158  
 Deban, Stephen . . . . . 318  
 Decker, Mary Beth . . . . . 52  
 Deecke, Volker B. . . . . 308  
 Deep Impact mission . . . . . 77  
 Deer . . . . . 78, 346  
 DEET . . . . . 29  
 DeForest, Craig . . . . . 310  
 DeGusta, David . . . . . 328  
 Del Parigi, Angelo . . . . . 4  
 Delaney, John R. . . . . 362  
 Deller, Craig . . . . . 181  
 DeLuca, Hector F. . . . . 230  
 Demaine, Erik D. . . . . 107  
 Dendrimers . . . . . 53  
 Dendrites . . . . . 389  
 Dennerl, Konrad . . . . . 342  
 Dennett, Daniel C. . . . . 252  
 Des Marais, David J. . . . . 372  
 Deserts . . . . . 248, 253  
 Detrick, Robert S. . . . . 364  
 Dettwyler, Katherine A. . . . . 329  
 Devaney, Robert L. . . . . 393  
 Diabetes . . . . . 29, 45, 69, 136,  
 . . . . . 152, 237, 356, 378  
 Diamonds . . . . . 90, 165, 165  
 Didenko, Yuri T. . . . . 126  
 Dieting . . . . . 13  
 Diffusion . . . . . 116  
 Dillehay, Tom D. . . . . 259  
 Dinges, David E. . . . . 153  
 Dinosaurs . . . . . 62, 179, 243, 270  
 Dioxins . . . . . 3, 77  
 Disinfection . . . . . 358  
 Distel, Dan L. . . . . 73  
 Dix, David . . . . . 216, 217  
 DNA . . . . . 22, 285, 324  
 Dogs . . . . . 46, 78, 324  
 Dolphins . . . . . 237  
 Donahue, Douglas J. . . . . 109  
 Doolittle, Russell F. . . . . 211  
 Doran, Peter T. . . . . 387  
 Dorn, Harry . . . . . 27  
 Double-beta decay . . . . . 10  
 Drea, Christine . . . . . 78  
 Driscoll, Monica . . . . . 261  
 Drought . . . . . 85, 174, 254  
 Drugs . . . . . 26, 171  
 Dudareva, Natalia . . . . . 58  
 Duennebier, Fred K. . . . . 364  
 Dugan, Laura . . . . . 27  
 Dumas, Christophe . . . . . 317  
 Dumesic, James A. . . . . 235  
 Duncan, Bruce . . . . . 137  
 Durdanovic, Igor . . . . . 106  
 Dye, Bruce A. . . . . 190  
 Dynes, Robert C. . . . . 214  
 Dyslexia . . . . . 94
- E**
- Earthquakes . . . . . 174, 307  
 Earthworms . . . . . 341  
 Easton, J. Donald . . . . . 297  
 Eating disorders . . . . . 4  
 Eckelbarger, Kevin J. . . . . 72  
 Ecosystems . . . . . 101  
 Eddy, David M. . . . . 379  
 Edelman, Gerald M. . . . . 252  
 Edney, Edward O. . . . . 360  
 Edwards, Alison J. . . . . 29  
 Edwards, Bradley C. . . . . 218  
 Egelhoff Jr., William F. . . . . 5  
 Egg cell . . . . . 216
- Egypt . . . . . 110  
 Einstein, Albert . . . . . 227, 394  
 Ekers, Ron D. . . . . 68  
*El Niño* . . . . . 110, 349, 400  
 Elderfield, Henry . . . . . 104  
 Elderly people . . . . . 53, 307  
 Eldredge, Niles . . . . . 188  
 Elections . . . . . 280  
 Electromagnetic fields . . . . . 45  
 Elgar, Mark . . . . . 293  
 Ellenbogen, James C. . . . . 89  
 Elliot, James L. . . . . 148  
 Elliott, Steven R. . . . . 10  
 Ellstrand, Norman . . . . . 99  
 Emissions, pollutants . . . . . 291  
 Enzymes . . . . . 244  
 Eppig, John . . . . . 217  
 Epstein-Barr virus . . . . . 75  
 Eriksson, Niles E. . . . . 40  
 Erlanger, Bernard . . . . . 27  
 Erosion . . . . . 221  
 Erythropoietin . . . . . 296  
*Escherichia coli* . . . . . 254  
 Estes, James . . . . . 308  
 Estrogen . . . . . 61, 382  
 Ethanol . . . . . 155  
 Europa . . . . . 62, 276, 318  
 Evans, Anthony G. . . . . 117  
 Evans, Denis J. . . . . 51, 286  
 Evans, William . . . . . 171  
 Everhart, Michael J. . . . . 244, 270  
 Everitt, Barry . . . . . 334  
 Evolution . . . . . 19, 110, 117,  
 . . . . . 149, 157, 186,  
 . . . . . 254, 312, 328, 387  
 Evrard, Gus . . . . . 139  
 Exercise . . . . . 365  
 Extinctions . . . . . 30  
 Extrasolar planets . . . . . 357  
 Eyes . . . . . 4, 69, 141, 198, 238
- F**
- Faces . . . . . 4, 118  
 Fadok, Valerie . . . . . 202  
 Fahsen, Federico . . . . . 237  
 Falanga, Vincent . . . . . 20  
 Fan, Shoushan . . . . . 286  
 Farming . . . . . 158  
 Farquhar, James . . . . . 91  
 Farquhar, Robert . . . . . 116  
 Farroni, Teresa . . . . . 4  
 Faults . . . . . 307  
 Feild, Taylor S. . . . . 265  
 Feinberg, Andrew . . . . . 101  
 Feinstein, Anthony . . . . . 166  
 Felton, Gary . . . . . 166  
 Feng, Albert S. . . . . 173  
 Fenn, John B. . . . . 229, 245  
 Fenselau, Catherine . . . . . 245  
 Fermat's last theorem . . . . . 392  
 Fernandez, Yan R. . . . . 69  
 Ferns . . . . . 341  
 Ferraro, Francesco . . . . . 25  
 Fertility . . . . . 333  
 Fiber optics . . . . . 212  
 Fields Medal . . . . . 117  
 Figueiredo, Ceu . . . . . 342  
 Finch, Caleb E. . . . . 261  
 Fiorini, Ettore . . . . . 10  
 Firth, John V. . . . . 67  
 Fischetti, Vincent A. . . . . 115  
 Fiser, Jozsef . . . . . 293  
 Fish . . . . . 84, 173, 181,  
 . . . . . 262, 277, 302  
 Fisher, Bernard . . . . . 243  
 Fisher, Timothy G. . . . . 284  
 Flaherty, Colleen . . . . . 101  
 Flake, Gary W. . . . . 106  
 Flavin, Christopher . . . . . 165  
 Flight . . . . . 86  
 Flowers . . . . . 56  
 Flukinger, Roy . . . . . 331
- Fluoridation . . . . . 350  
 Focht, Dean R. . . . . 317  
 Folkman, M. Judah . . . . . 67  
 Fonseca, Vivian . . . . . 137  
 Foraminifera . . . . . 54, 104  
 Formic acid . . . . . 155  
 Fossil fuels . . . . . 235  
 Foster, Paul . . . . . 36  
 Foster, William . . . . . 9  
 Fox, Christopher G. . . . . 363  
 Fractals . . . . . 392  
 Franc, Nathalie C. . . . . 203  
 Franks, Nick P. . . . . 132  
 Franks, Nigel . . . . . 388  
 Fraser, Andrew . . . . . 254  
 Frauscher, Ferdinand . . . . . 355  
 Frayer, David W. . . . . 329  
 Free radicals . . . . . 381  
 Freeman, Walter J. . . . . 252  
 Freking, Brad . . . . . 221  
 Frey, Dennis . . . . . 125  
 Freymueller, Jeffrey T. . . . . 307  
 Friedlander, Martin . . . . . 70  
 Friedman, Simon . . . . . 26  
 Frogs . . . . . 19, 173, 275, 318, 356  
 Fuel cells . . . . . 21, 155, 155, 235  
 Fukatsu, Takema . . . . . 9  
 Fuller, R. Buckminster . . . . . 26  
 Fungi . . . . . 197  
 Furukawa, Yoshinori . . . . . 381  
 Fusion . . . . . 125
- G**
- GABA . . . . . 212  
 Gabrielse, Gerald . . . . . 399  
 Gabuzda, Dana . . . . . 35  
 Galaxies . . . . . 68, 164, 205, 221,  
 . . . . . 244, 260, 339, 349, 376  
 Galileo mission . . . . . 326  
 Gallager, Scott M. . . . . 74  
 Gallium . . . . . 325  
 Galloway, Duncan . . . . . 205  
 Gamma-ray astronomy . . . . . 25  
 Gan, Wen-Biao . . . . . 389  
 Garcia, Nicolas . . . . . 5  
 Garcia-Lario, Pedro . . . . . 37  
 Gardiner, David M. . . . . 20  
 Gardner, Malcolm . . . . . 211  
 Gardner, Michael J. . . . . 254  
 Garwin, Richard L. . . . . 259  
 Gavril, Fotis P. . . . . 189  
 Gawley, Robert . . . . . 84  
 Gazzaniga, Michael S. . . . . 118  
 Gebhardt, Karl . . . . . 180, 301  
 Geckos . . . . . 133  
 Geiger, Jonathan D. . . . . 38  
 Genant, Harry K. . . . . 382  
 Gene mutations . . . . . 157  
 Gene therapy . . . . . 54  
 Genes, regulation . . . . . 100  
 Genetic diversity . . . . . 149  
 Genetic imprinting . . . . . 100, 221  
 Genomes . . . . . 211, 254, 254  
 Gerritsen, Annette A.M. . . . . 205  
 Gershoff, Elizabeth T. . . . . 77  
 Gerssen, Joris . . . . . 180  
 Ghezzi, Pietro . . . . . 298  
 Ghrelin . . . . . 14, 83  
 Giacconi, Riccardo . . . . . 229  
 Giedd, Jay N. . . . . 227  
 Gielan, Stephan . . . . . 365  
 Gilbert, Jeremy . . . . . 142  
 Gilbertson, Mark W. . . . . 285  
 Gilmore, Gerard . . . . . 52, 376  
 Ginseng . . . . . 29  
 Glaciers . . . . . 246, 307  
 Glass, Jonathan D. . . . . 197  
 Glenn, Scott M. . . . . 362  
 Global warming . . . . . 54, 72  
 Globular clusters . . . . . 52  
 Glutamate . . . . . 195  
 Glycogen . . . . . 38
- Goek, Gerard . . . . . 302  
 Gold . . . . . 204  
 Gold, Lois S. . . . . 121  
 Goldberg, Barry B. . . . . 356  
 Goldhaber-Gordon, David . . . . . 89  
 Goldman, Steven A. . . . . 297  
 Golf . . . . . 238  
 Gomez, Arturo . . . . . 142  
 Goodall, Jane . . . . . 165  
 Goodman, Jesse L. . . . . 198, 221  
 Gordon, Jeffrey M. . . . . 212  
 Gordon, Joshua A. . . . . 213  
 Goswami, Usha . . . . . 94  
 Gott, J. Richard . . . . . 395  
 Gottesfeld, Shimshon . . . . . 155  
 Gottlieb, Gilbert . . . . . 186  
 Gottlieb, Michael . . . . . 211  
 Gotto, Antonio . . . . . 172  
 Gould, Kevin . . . . . 264, 265  
 Gowda, D. Channe . . . . . 99  
 Grammar . . . . . 134  
 Grant, Igor . . . . . 13  
 Gratta, Giorgio . . . . . 10, 371  
 Gravitational waves . . . . . 68  
 Gray, L. Earl . . . . . 36  
 Green, Eric . . . . . 254  
 Greene, Brian . . . . . 396  
 Greenfield, Michael . . . . . 356  
 Greenhouse gases . . . . . 261, 291  
 Greenland . . . . . 150  
 Greenwood, M.R.C. . . . . 69  
 Grief . . . . . 157  
 Griffiths, Philip A. . . . . 117  
 Grodinsky, Alan . . . . . 13, 93  
 Grosjean, Martin . . . . . 259  
 Groundwater . . . . . 42  
 Gruetter, Rolf . . . . . 38  
 Grutzendler, Jaime . . . . . 389  
 Guillette Jr., Louis J. . . . . 246  
 Gummerman, George J. . . . . 174  
 Gundale, Michael J. . . . . 341  
 Gutfreund, Hanoch . . . . . 394
- H**
- Haapanen, Lori A.D. . . . . 40  
 Haeussler, Peter J. . . . . 307  
 Haggerty, Steven E. . . . . 90  
 Haight, Richard A. . . . . 316  
 Hail, Sossina . . . . . 156  
 Hairiri, Ahmad R. . . . . 334  
 Hallenbeck, John . . . . . 147  
 Hallmark, Jerry . . . . . 156  
 Hamaguchi, Masaaki . . . . . 333  
 Hamilton, Andrew . . . . . 53  
 Hamilton, Andrew D. . . . . 213  
 Hamir, Amir N. . . . . 348  
 Hand, Duncan P. . . . . 316  
 Hanken, James . . . . . 275  
 Hansen, Everett . . . . . 94  
 Hansen, James . . . . . 253  
 Hanson, R. Karl . . . . . 60  
 Hara, Amy K. . . . . 382  
 Harbottle, Garman . . . . . 109  
 Harbour, J. William . . . . . 238  
 Harris, Grant . . . . . 60  
 Harris, Jeffrey . . . . . 90  
 Harrison, Neil L. . . . . 132  
 Hart, Benjamin . . . . . 324  
 Harvey, Charles F. . . . . 325  
 Hayes, Tyrone . . . . . 275  
 Hazeltine, Eliot . . . . . 251  
 Heaney, Peter J. . . . . 90  
 Hearing . . . . . 158  
 Hearn, Robert A. . . . . 107  
 Heart disease . . . . . 36, 54, 61, 62,  
 . . . . . 237, 302, 356, 364, 365, 378  
 Heat . . . . . 141  
 Hebling, Christopher . . . . . 155  
 Heckman, Timothy M. . . . . 244  
 Heiles, Carl E. . . . . 260  
*Helicobacter pylori* . . . . . 36, 94, 341  
 Heliopause . . . . . 342



- Heller, H. Craig . . . . . 38  
Hemoglobin . . . . . 214  
Hengartner, Michael . . . . . 202  
Henick-Kling, Thomas . . . . . 150  
Hepatitis . . . . . 93  
Herbers, Joan M. . . . . 148  
Herbicides . . . . . 228  
Hergenrother, Carl W. . . . . 269  
Herman-Giddens, Marcia . . . . . 3  
Hermaphrodites . . . . . 302  
Herpes . . . . . 292, 399  
Hetherington, Suzan E. . . . . 265  
Hibbet, David S. . . . . 197  
High-temperature  
superconductivity . . . . . 325, 350  
Hill, Richard C. . . . . 46  
Hillis, David . . . . . 325  
Hip fractures . . . . . 142  
Hippocampus . . . . . 285  
Hippos, Lawrence . . . . . 340  
HIV . . . . . 26, 35, 93, 149, 318  
HLAC Korb, Malak . . . . . 326  
Hoch, William A. . . . . 265  
Hockaday, Robert . . . . . 156  
Hodge, Clyde W. . . . . 212  
Hoffman, Paul F. . . . . 246  
Hoffman, Ronald . . . . . 372  
Hoffmann, John P. . . . . 43  
Holbrook, N. Michele . . . . . 265  
Holder, Tony . . . . . 99  
Hole, David G. . . . . 158  
Holekamp, Kay E. . . . . 118  
Holman, Matthew J. . . . . 317  
Holtz Jr., Thomas R. . . . . 179  
Hominids . . . . . 19, 253  
*Homo sapiens* . . . . . 148, 189,  
. . . . . 328, 387  
Hond, Elly Den . . . . . 3  
Honeybees . . . . . 13  
Hormone replacement therapy  
. . . . . 61, 402  
Hormones, environmental . . . . .  
. . . . . 77, 245, 275, 302, 333  
Horne, Jim A. . . . . 153  
Horvitz, H. Robert . . . . . 203, 229  
Hossaert-McKey, Martine . . . . . 57  
Howell, F. Clark . . . . . 329  
Hrdy, Sarah Blaffer . . . . . 188  
Hsu, Pai-Hui I. . . . . 133  
Hu, Wayne . . . . . 195, 390  
Hua, Susan Z. . . . . 5  
Hubble Space Telescope . . . . . 37,  
. . . . . 164, 180  
Hudler, George . . . . . 70  
Hudson, James G. . . . . 360  
Hugh-Jones, Martin . . . . . 373  
Hughes, John P. . . . . 229  
Hughes, John R. . . . . 341  
Human papillomaviruses . . . . .  
. . . . . 292, 323  
Humor . . . . . 308  
Hung, George K. . . . . 238  
Hunger . . . . . 4, 152  
Hunting . . . . . 221  
Huntington's disease . . . . . 173, 334  
Hurst, W. Jeffrey . . . . . 38  
Husserl, Edmund . . . . . 251  
Hutt-Fletcher, Lindsey . . . . . 75  
Huynh, Mai-Lan N. . . . . 204  
Hybrid electric vehicles . . . . . 196  
Hydrogel . . . . . 20  
Hydrogen fuels . . . . . 235  
Hydrothermal vents . . . . . 204  
Hyenas . . . . . 78  
Hygiene hypothesis . . . . . 150  
Hyperactivity . . . . . 227
- I**
- Ibuprofen . . . . . 180, 278  
Ice ages . . . . . 246  
Ice cores . . . . . 387  
Ichthyosaurs . . . . . 122
- icicles . . . . . 381  
IL-6 . . . . . 136  
Imai, Shinsuke . . . . . 244  
Imatinib . . . . . 371  
Imitation . . . . . 221  
Immunity . . . . . 36, 75, 110,  
. . . . . 147, 294, 309, 326  
Impacts . . . . . 318  
Implants . . . . . 142  
Insects . . . . . 29, 56, 125, 166, 246  
Insulin resistance . . . . . 152, 356  
Interferometry . . . . . 381  
Interferon . . . . . 371  
Interleukins . . . . . 152, 309  
International Space Station . . . . .  
. . . . . 318  
Irrigation . . . . . 325  
Isaacs, John D. . . . . 219  
Izzo, Thiago J. . . . . 285
- J**
- Jackson, Andrew P. . . . . 312  
Jackson, Gregory R. . . . . 238  
Jacobson, Michael F. . . . . 121  
Jacque, Jean-Marc . . . . . 93  
Jaffe, Arthur . . . . . 393  
Jaffe, Daniel . . . . . 261  
Jang, Myoseon . . . . . 361  
Jellyfish . . . . . 52  
Jets, astronomical . . . . . 299  
Jewitt, David C. . . . . 69  
Jiang, Kaili . . . . . 286  
Jiang, Ming . . . . . 189  
Johnson, Christine Cole . . . . . 157  
Johnson, Jeffrey A. . . . . 138  
Johnson, Ned K. . . . . 169  
Johnson, Nels . . . . . 43  
Johnson, Scott P. . . . . 294  
Johnston, John J. . . . . 85  
Johnston, Murray V. . . . . 361  
Joints . . . . . 142  
Jones, Glenville . . . . . 230  
Jorga, Karin . . . . . 379  
Jupiter . . . . . 22, 326  
Juteson, John. . . . . 355
- K**
- Kaaret, Pgilip E. . . . . 299  
Kabat, David . . . . . 36  
Kachar, Bechara . . . . . 158  
Kafatos, Fotis . . . . . 211  
Kafka, Martin P. . . . . 59  
Kagan, Elisa J. . . . . 174  
Kagan, Jerome . . . . . 301  
Kahn, Richard . . . . . 380  
Kaiser, Roman . . . . . 57  
Kangaroo rats . . . . . 253  
Kaplan, David . . . . . 100  
Kaplan, Edward H. . . . . 21  
Karovska, Margarita . . . . . 102  
Kaspi, Victoria M. . . . . 189  
Kauffmann, Guinevere . . . . . 244  
Kaufman, Steven C. . . . . 46  
Kaufman, Terrence . . . . . 355  
Kavelaars, J.J. . . . . 317  
Kayal, Neeraj . . . . . 266  
Kear, Benjamin P. . . . . 123  
Keith, Tim P. . . . . 61  
Kelber, Almut . . . . . 350  
Kelch, Steffen . . . . . 201
- Kelley, William M. . . . . 308  
Kellner, Alexander W.A. . . . . 35  
Kendall, Cyril W.C. . . . . 30  
Kennish, Michael J. . . . . 73  
Kenyon, Cynthia . . . . . 261  
Kern, Mark . . . . . 233  
Ketelaar, Timothy . . . . . 188  
Kiesecker, Joseph M. . . . . 19, 275  
Kirkwood, Thomas B.L. . . . . 261  
Kiselman, Dan . . . . . 310  
Kisiday, John . . . . . 93  
Kissing . . . . . 40  
Kiviat, Nancy . . . . . 293  
Klapdor-Kleingrothaus,  
Hans V. . . . . 11  
Kleine, Thorsten . . . . . 131  
Klug, Dennis D. . . . . 165  
Klunk, William . . . . . 126  
Knee injuries . . . . . 142  
Knight, Raymond . . . . . 59  
Knudsen, Jette . . . . . 56  
Kochar, Mahendr S. . . . . 278  
Kohl, Paul A. . . . . 156  
Kolb, Ronald R. . . . . 37  
Komossa, Stefanie . . . . . 339  
Kondo effect . . . . . 88  
Konig, Karsten . . . . . 316  
Koss, Mary P. . . . . 59  
Kournikakis, Bill . . . . . 373  
Koutsky, Laura A. . . . . 323  
Kouwenhoven, Leo P. . . . . 89  
Kovac, John . . . . . 195  
Kramer, Gregory . . . . . 339  
Krause, Tyra Grove . . . . . 150  
Krauss, David A. . . . . 270  
Krawertz, Stephen . . . . . 216  
Kripke, Daniel F. . . . . 153  
Krug, Robert . . . . . 196  
Kugler, Joachim . . . . . 350  
Kuhajda, Francis P. . . . . 13  
Kuiper belt . . . . . 62, 190, 228, 301  
Kulkarni, Shri . . . . . 189  
Kunzler, Jay . . . . . 134  
Kurosu, Utako . . . . . 9  
Kurtz, Ronald M. . . . . 317
- L**
- La Niña . . . . . 85  
Lafforgue, Laurent . . . . . 117  
Lahey, Richard T. . . . . 126  
Lahn, Bruce . . . . . 314  
Lai, F. Anthony . . . . . 189  
Lake Agassiz . . . . . 283  
Lake Vida . . . . . 387  
Lakka, Hanna-Maaria . . . . . 356  
Lal, Amit . . . . . 125  
Laland, Kevin N. . . . . 187  
Lam, Lloyd T. . . . . 262  
Lammers, Richard B. . . . . 42  
Lancelet . . . . . 294  
Landau, Rolf . . . . . 286  
Landslides . . . . . 67  
Langenfelds, Ray L. . . . . 291  
Langer, Robert . . . . . 201  
Langlands, Robert P. . . . . 117  
Language . . . . . 134  
Laplace instability . . . . . 381  
Lardner, Bjorn . . . . . 356  
Large Magellanic Cloud . . . . . 52  
Larsen, Clark S. . . . . 329  
Larson, Richard A. . . . . 371  
Larsson, Joakim . . . . . 245  
Lasers . . . . . 46, 149, 181, 221, 315  
Lash, Jonathan . . . . . 165  
Laver, Jim . . . . . 110  
Lawrence, James F. . . . . 213  
Lead . . . . . 190, 350  
Learned, John G. . . . . 371  
Leaves . . . . . 264  
Lebel, Serge . . . . . 328  
LeDoux, Joseph . . . . . 118  
Lee, David . . . . . 264, 265
- Lee, Jeannie T. . . . . 101  
Lee, Sam-geun . . . . . 344  
Lee, Young-Wook . . . . . 52  
Lehrer, Steven . . . . . 171  
Lelieved, Jos . . . . . 261  
Lendlein, Andreas . . . . . 201  
Lenstra, Hendrik . . . . . 267  
Leptin . . . . . 152  
Leverington, David W. . . . . 283  
Levine, Joel S. . . . . 291  
Levy, Becca R. . . . . 53  
Levy, Thomas E. . . . . 61  
Lewis, Carl . . . . . 86  
Lewis, Michael A. . . . . 345  
Li, Qunging . . . . . 286  
Li, Xianchun . . . . . 246  
Lieberman, Daniel . . . . . 19  
Lieberman, Paul . . . . . 75  
Liese, Angela D. . . . . 357  
Lifton, Robert K. . . . . 155  
Lile, Robert G. . . . . 59  
Linderman, Robert . . . . . 70  
Lions . . . . . 117  
Liss, Peter S. . . . . 102  
Lisse, Carey M. . . . . 342  
Liston, Conor . . . . . 301  
Litaker, Wayne . . . . . 84  
Lithium . . . . . 196  
Litman, Gary W. . . . . 294  
Liu, Hong . . . . . 126  
Liu, Jie . . . . . 389  
Liu, Kambiu . . . . . 174  
Liu, Rui Hai . . . . . 141  
Liu, Yijun . . . . . 4  
Lizards . . . . . 293  
Lloyd, Dan . . . . . 251  
Loaiza, David J. . . . . 259  
Lockman, Felix J. . . . . 260  
Loeb, Avi . . . . . 139, 140, 205  
Logan, Bruce E. . . . . 235  
Lohmann, Ulrike . . . . . 361  
Longevity . . . . . 53, 182  
Longo, Peter . . . . . 316  
Lordkipanidze, David . . . . . 187  
Loske, Achim M. . . . . 358  
Loughheed, Ronald W. . . . . 37  
Luepker, Russell V. . . . . 365  
Lumpectomies . . . . . 243  
Lunine, Jonathan . . . . . 372  
Luthe, Dawn S. . . . . 166  
Lycopene . . . . . 29
- M**
- Ma, Xiaomei . . . . . 179  
Macaulay, Linda . . . . . 168  
MacAyeal, Douglas R. . . . . 400  
Macchetto, F. Duccio . . . . . 102  
MacDonald, William . . . . . 94  
Machado, Jose C. . . . . 342  
Machining . . . . . 117, 315  
MacKay, David J.C. . . . . 141  
MacKinnon, Stephen . . . . . 372  
Macular degeneration . . . . .  
. . . . . 69, 198, 238  
Madsen, Kreesten M. . . . . 349  
Maerkl, Sebastian J. . . . . 198  
Magnesium diboride . . . . . 158  
Magnetars . . . . . 189  
Magnetic Resonance Imaging . . . . .  
. . . . . 26, 245, 251, 275, 301, 374  
Magnetic storage . . . . . 5  
Maier, Heiner . . . . . 53  
Mail . . . . . 142  
Maillard reaction . . . . . 213  
Maisey, John G. . . . . 35  
Major histocompatibility  
compatibility . . . . . 149  
Majorana, Ettore . . . . . 10  
Makovicky, Peter J. . . . . 179  
Makris, Nicholas C. . . . . 276  
Malamuth, Neil M. . . . . 59  
Malaria . . . . . 99, 110, 211
- Malin, Michael . . . . . 36  
Mallo, Gustavo V. . . . . 110  
Manhattan Project . . . . . 325  
Mao, Ho-Kwang . . . . . 316  
Maps . . . . . 109  
Marchalonis, John J. . . . . 294  
Marchis, Franck . . . . . 326  
Markwardt, Craig . . . . . 24  
Marriage . . . . . 157  
Mars . . . . . 131, 285, 342, 372  
Mars Global Surveyor . . . . . 285  
Marsden, Brian G. . . . . 228  
Martill, David M. . . . . 35  
Martin, Larry D. . . . . 52, 122  
Martini, Paul . . . . . 221  
Masel, Richard I. . . . . 156  
Mason, Thomas G. . . . . 149  
Mass spectrometry . . . . . 245  
Mastectomies . . . . . 243  
Mating evolution . . . . . 117  
Matsumoto, George I. . . . . 53  
Matthews, H. Scott . . . . . 309  
Maurelle, Bruno . . . . . 148  
Maya civilization . . . . . 38, 237, 355  
McArthur, Barbara . . . . . 357  
McArthur, John M. . . . . 326  
McCabe, Gregory J. . . . . 86  
McCarthy, Jim . . . . . 6  
McCarville, Katherine . . . . . 270  
McCrone, Lucy B. . . . . 109  
McDade, Lucinda . . . . . 57  
McDonald, Arthur B. . . . . 371  
McEuen, Paul L. . . . . 88, 214  
McEwen, Alfred S. . . . . 364  
McFadden, Lucy-Ann A. . . . . 116  
McGovern, Patrick . . . . . 38  
McKnight, Diane . . . . . 388  
McLaughlin, Kelly . . . . . 245  
Measles . . . . . 349  
Mechelli, Andrea . . . . . 251  
Medulloblastoma . . . . . 131  
Meehl, Gerald A. . . . . 54  
Meerlo, Peter . . . . . 153  
Meggers, Betty J. . . . . 259  
Mehler, Jacques . . . . . 134  
Melchor, Ricardo N. . . . . 62  
Memory . . . . . 293, 301, 307,  
. . . . . 334, 389  
Mendelson, Andrew R. . . . . 285  
Mendez, Mariano . . . . . 292  
Merritt, David . . . . . 68  
Meselson, Matthew . . . . . 373  
Mesoamerica . . . . . 355  
Messing, Robert O. . . . . 212  
Metabolic syndrome . . . . . 356  
Metabolism . . . . . 13  
Metals . . . . . 61, 117, 276  
Methanol . . . . . 155  
Metolachlor . . . . . 275  
Michal, Carl . . . . . 100  
Michelozzi, Paola . . . . . 45  
Microchips . . . . . 198, 309  
Microelectronics . . . . . 88, 125,  
. . . . . 133, 214, 388  
Micromachines . . . . . 51, 125,  
. . . . . 149, 315  
Microaptor . . . . . 349  
Microspheres . . . . . 149  
Microwaves . . . . . 38, 318  
Migeon, Barbara R. . . . . 100  
Migueles, Stephen A. . . . . 318, 318  
Milinski, Manfred . . . . . 277  
Milky Way Galaxy . . . . . 52, 260, 277, 376  
Miller, Cole . . . . . 25, 180, 292, 299  
Miller, David . . . . . 216  
Millis, Robert L. . . . . 228  
Milner, Jo . . . . . 189  
Milner, Thomas E. . . . . 212  
Minerals . . . . . 90, 302  
Moe, Michael K. . . . . 10  
Moffitt, Terrie . . . . . 68  
Molecular mimicry . . . . . 53

## INDEX MOLECULAR SIEVES – SEXUAL SELECTION

- Molecular sieves . . . . . 213  
Mollusks . . . . . 72  
Monge, Janet . . . . . 328  
Monnin, Thibaud . . . . . 147  
Monoamine oxidase . . . . . 68  
Monsoons . . . . . 54  
Montemagno, Carlo . . . . . 291  
Mooney, Robert A. . . . . 137  
Moore, Harry . . . . . 20  
Moore, Jon A. . . . . 262  
Moore, Sarah L. . . . . 182  
Moran, Nancy . . . . . 8  
Morphine . . . . . 334  
Morrow, Monica . . . . . 243  
Morse, Stephen . . . . . 115  
Mosaics . . . . . 100  
Mosasaurs . . . . . 270  
Mosquitoes . . . . . 29, 211  
Motani, Ryosuke . . . . . 122  
Mothers . . . . . 110, 230  
Moths . . . . . 350  
Motor cortex . . . . . 374  
Mottram, Donald S. . . . . 213  
Muhs, Daniel R. . . . . 248, 249  
Mukherjee, Reshmi . . . . . 205  
Mulchaey, John S. . . . . 221  
Muller, Wendt . . . . . 230  
Mullington, Janet . . . . . 153  
Multiplexing . . . . . 198  
Mummification . . . . . 243  
Munce, Chad . . . . . 332  
Munoz-Furlong, Anne . . . . . 40  
Muons . . . . . 158  
Murphy, Nate L. . . . . 243  
Murray, Scott O. . . . . 275  
Murray, Stephen S. . . . . 102  
Muscles . . . . . 260  
Music . . . . . 334, 339  
Musick, John A. . . . . 233  
Mutagenesis . . . . . 19  
Mycorrhiza . . . . . 197
- N**
- Nabel, Elizabeth . . . . . 54  
Nagamine, Kentaro . . . . . 139  
Nagata, Shigekazu . . . . . 203  
Nagourney, Robert . . . . . 190  
Naito, Eichi . . . . . 374  
Nanotechnology . . . . . 3, 5, 29, 51, 88, 117, 221, 276, 286, 291, 357, 388  
Nazar, Linda F. . . . . 197  
Neandertals . . . . . 148, 189, 328  
Nebulas, planetary . . . . . 37  
Nelson, Douglas . . . . . 169  
Nematodes . . . . . 229  
Neolithic . . . . . 221  
Neoproterozoic . . . . . 246  
Neptunium . . . . . 259  
Nestle, Frank O. . . . . 163  
Nesvorny, David . . . . . 30  
Neurons . . . . . 334, 389  
Neutrinos . . . . . 10, 229, 371  
Neutron stars . . . . . 189, 292  
Nevanlinna Prize . . . . . 117  
Nicastro, Fabrizio . . . . . 83  
Nichols, Elizabeth . . . . . 124  
Nicholson, Philip . . . . . 317  
Nickel . . . . . 163  
Nicotine . . . . . 163, 340  
Ninov, Victor . . . . . 37  
Nishihata, Yasuo . . . . . 61  
Nitric oxide . . . . . 30  
Nitroglycerin . . . . . 30  
Nizet, Victor . . . . . 326  
NMDA receptors . . . . . 195  
NMR imaging.  
    See Magnetic resonance imaging  
Nobel Prizes . . . . . 229, 245  
Noble, Denis . . . . . 379
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs . . . . . 278  
Norse, Elliott A. . . . . 232  
Norwalk-like virus . . . . . 389  
Nuclear magnetic resonance . . . . . 150  
Nuclear power . . . . . 125, 259  
Nuclear weapons . . . . . 259, 325  
Number theory . . . . . 117, 266, 392  
Nurmi, Hannu . . . . . 282  
Nuts . . . . . 40
- O**
- O'Handley, Robert . . . . . 200  
Obesity . . . . . 4, 13, 14, 29, 46, 67, 83, 136, 152  
Oceans . . . . . 102, 104, 362  
Oehninger, Sergio . . . . . 190, 217  
Oganessian, Yuri Ts. . . . . 38  
Ogawa, Naohisa . . . . . 381  
Olin, Jacqueline . . . . . 109  
Olmec civilization . . . . . 355  
Olson, Wendy . . . . . 318  
Onions . . . . . 244  
Optical tweezers . . . . . 51, 149  
Origami . . . . . 46  
Ortiz, Christine . . . . . 13  
Ortiz, Paul . . . . . 232  
Osserman, Robert . . . . . 392  
Osteoblasts . . . . . 230  
Osteoporosis . . . . . 230, 382  
Ostriker, Jeremiah P. . . . . 83  
Otteman, Karen M. . . . . 342  
Owen, Ian P.F. . . . . 182  
Ownby, Dennis R. . . . . 157  
Oxygen . . . . . 163  
Oxygen therapy . . . . . 214  
Ozbek, Atakan . . . . . 155  
Ozone . . . . . 261, 269
- P**
- p53 protein . . . . . 238  
Pacemaker . . . . . 365  
Packer, Craig . . . . . 117  
Paerels, Frits . . . . . 292  
Page, David . . . . . 254  
Page, Susan E. . . . . 291  
Pain . . . . . 382  
Paleoseismicity . . . . . 174  
Palis, Jacob . . . . . 117  
Palladium . . . . . 61, 93  
Pancreatic islets . . . . . 45  
Pappu, Ravikanth S. . . . . 221  
Paralysis . . . . . 197  
Parasites . . . . . 19, 99, 110, 182, 197, 211, 285  
Pardoll, Drew . . . . . 309  
Parenting . . . . . 77, 181  
Pariza, Michael W. . . . . 6, 121, 214  
Park, Hongkun . . . . . 88  
Parker III, Theodore A. . . . . 169  
Parkin, Kirk L. . . . . 244  
Parkinson's disease . . . . . 382  
Pastoor, Tim . . . . . 275  
Paternity . . . . . 78  
Patterson, Bruce D. . . . . 118  
Payne, Adam . . . . . 181  
PC-SPEs . . . . . 190  
Peanuts . . . . . 40  
Pease, R. Fabian W. . . . . 133  
Peat bogs . . . . . 291  
Pellmyr, Olle . . . . . 56  
Peng, Eric . . . . . 349  
Penn, John S. . . . . 70  
Perception . . . . . 4, 275, 374  
Perforin . . . . . 318  
Perovskites . . . . . 61, 93  
Perpetual motion . . . . . 286  
Perry, Michael D. . . . . 315  
Pesticides . . . . . 29, 179, 302, 350
- Peterson, Jeffrey B. . . . . 390  
Peterson, Larry . . . . . 197  
Peterson, Lyle R. . . . . 198, 221  
Petitti, Diana B. . . . . 61  
Petrie, Marion . . . . . 230  
*Pfiesteria* . . . . . 84  
Pharmacogenetics . . . . . 171  
Phillips, Kathryn A. . . . . 171  
Photography . . . . . 331  
Photoreceptor cells . . . . . 238  
Phthalates . . . . . 36  
Phytochromes . . . . . 285  
*Phytophthora* . . . . . 70  
Picherdy, Eran . . . . . 58  
Pierce, Richard H. . . . . 345  
Piersma, Theunis . . . . . 237  
Pietrolusti, Antonio . . . . . 94  
Pietsch, Theodore W. . . . . 262  
Pigments . . . . . 181  
Pike, Nathan . . . . . 9  
Pinker, Steven . . . . . 186  
Planetary nebula . . . . . 142  
Planets, extrasolar . . . . . 22, 357  
Planets, formation . . . . . 131, 142  
Plants, disease resistance . . . . . 166, 246  
Plasmas . . . . . 315  
Plastics . . . . . 133, 200, 214  
Platt, Frances M. . . . . 374  
Play . . . . . 78  
Pleistocene extinctions . . . . . 51  
Plevy, Scott E. . . . . 37  
Plonsky, Mark . . . . . 324  
Pluto . . . . . 62, 148, 228  
Plutonium . . . . . 259, 325  
Pober, Jordan S. . . . . 147  
Pohl, Mary E.D. . . . . 355  
Polarized light . . . . . 149, 149, 195  
Poliomyelitis . . . . . 22, 93, 197  
Pollak, Seth D. . . . . 68  
Pollination . . . . . 13, 56  
Pollution . . . . . 3, 157, 253, 261, 360  
Polychlorinated biphenyls . . . . . 3  
Pomerance, Carl . . . . . 266  
Porphyry . . . . . 213  
Porter, Lon . . . . . 388  
Porter, Warren . . . . . 228  
Post-traumatic stress disorder . . . . . 165, 285  
Postle, Bradley R. . . . . 251  
Potatoes . . . . . 213  
Potkin, Steven G. . . . . 301  
Poverty . . . . . 164  
Powis, Terry G. . . . . 38  
Predation . . . . . 166, 181, 246, 308, 318  
Pregnancy . . . . . 163  
Prentky, Robert A. . . . . 59  
Preston-Martin, Susan . . . . . 180  
Prestwich, Glenn D. . . . . 20  
Prezant, David J. . . . . 221  
Primates . . . . . 328, 399  
Prime numbers . . . . . 266  
Prions . . . . . 346  
Priscu, John C. . . . . 388  
Prisoner's dilemma . . . . . 373  
Probability theory . . . . . 141  
Progesterin . . . . . 61  
Pronko, Peter P. . . . . 316  
Prostaglandin . . . . . 278  
Protein kinase C . . . . . 212  
Protein X . . . . . 238  
Psaty, Bruce . . . . . 172  
Pterosaurs . . . . . 35, 270  
Puberty . . . . . 3  
Pulsars . . . . . 189  
Pulver, Ann E. . . . . 196
- Q**
- Quake, Stephen R. . . . . 198  
Quantum dots . . . . . 88  
Quantum mechanics . . . . . 227
- Quoar . . . . . 228  
Quarks . . . . . 14, 292  
Quartz, Steven R. . . . . 187  
Quasars . . . . . 83, 299  
Queller, David . . . . . 8
- R**
- Rabbits . . . . . 238  
Racaniello, Vincent . . . . . 22  
Radiation therapy . . . . . 243  
Radies, Dirk . . . . . 249  
Radio waves . . . . . 45  
Raff, Martin . . . . . 312  
Raguso, Robert . . . . . 56  
Ralph, Daniel C. . . . . 88  
Raman microspectroscopy . . . . . 109  
Ramirez, Arthur P. . . . . 214  
Random-walk process . . . . . 116  
Ranft, Richard . . . . . 169  
Rapists . . . . . 59  
Rats . . . . . 38  
Rauscher, Frederick . . . . . 186  
Ravenscroft, Peter . . . . . 325  
Reading . . . . . 94  
Reasoning . . . . . 307  
Reaven, Gerald M. . . . . 357  
Rechtschaffen, Alan . . . . . 154  
Reddy, Agami . . . . . 212  
Redshifts . . . . . 292  
Reed, Catherine L. . . . . 334  
Reid, Neil . . . . . 376  
Reid, Ted . . . . . 134  
Reilly, Jim . . . . . 331  
Reiss, Howard . . . . . 340  
Reitman, Marc L. . . . . 67  
Relativity theory . . . . . 68, 227  
Religious beliefs . . . . . 186  
Reneekens, Jeroen . . . . . 237  
Rennels, Margaret . . . . . 22  
Rensel, Jack . . . . . 345  
Reproduction . . . . . 36, 216  
Reptiles . . . . . 78  
Research, funding . . . . . 69  
Resurrection plants . . . . . 254  
Retinas . . . . . 198, 238  
ReVelle, Douglas O. . . . . 323  
Revonsuo, Antti . . . . . 252  
Rice, Marnie E. . . . . 59  
Rich, Michael . . . . . 180  
Riddle, Donald L. . . . . 229  
Ridker, Paul M. . . . . 364  
Rieseberg, Loren . . . . . 126  
Riess, Warren C. . . . . 72  
Rimmele, Thomas R. . . . . 310  
Riviezzo, Nick . . . . . 332  
Rivkin, Andrew S. . . . . 269  
RNA . . . . . 35, 93, 216  
RNA interference . . . . . 189, 254  
Robaire, Bernard . . . . . 374  
Roberts, B. Lee . . . . . 158  
Robots . . . . . 133, 365  
Rode, Andrei V. . . . . 315  
Rodem, Dan M. . . . . 172  
Roe, Diana . . . . . 26  
Roe, R. Michael . . . . . 29  
Roeske, Frank . . . . . 316  
Rokhsar, Daniel S. . . . . 254  
Rolf, Jens . . . . . 6  
Rollo, Franco . . . . . 221  
Romer's gap . . . . . 5  
Romo, Ranulfo . . . . . 374  
Ronney, Paul D. . . . . 156  
Rook, Graham A.W. . . . . 150  
Rosen, Peter . . . . . 371  
Rosenberg, Karen . . . . . 329  
Rosenberg, Steven A. . . . . 309  
Ross, Theodora S. . . . . 173  
Rossi X-ray Timing Explorer . . . . . 189  
Rostrup-Nielsen, Jens . . . . . 235  
Roubik, David W. . . . . 13  
Rowe, Locke . . . . . 6
- Rowland, Lewis P. . . . . 205  
RSA cryptosystem . . . . . 266  
Ruano, Gualberto . . . . . 172  
Rubinstein, Pablo . . . . . 262  
Rupen, Michael P. . . . . 300  
Rupnick, Maria A. . . . . 67  
Russell, Anthony . . . . . 133  
Ruxton, Graeme D. . . . . 123  
Ryan, Clarence . . . . . 166  
Rydstrom, Gary . . . . . 170
- S**
- Saari, Donald . . . . . 280, 281  
Sagman, Uri . . . . . 26  
Salmonson, Tomas . . . . . 245  
Sand dunes . . . . . 248  
Sanders, Frank . . . . . 270  
Sanders, Jeremy . . . . . 54  
Saper, Clifford . . . . . 132  
Sapolsky, Robert M. . . . . 285  
Sarazin, Xavier . . . . . 11  
Sarcopenia . . . . . 260  
Sargent, R. Craig . . . . . 181  
Sarraf, John L. . . . . 325  
Sasaki, Ryuzo . . . . . 296  
Satir, Peter . . . . . 292  
Saturn . . . . . 364  
Savage, Blair D. . . . . 260  
Savill, John . . . . . 202  
Savinin, Robert F. . . . . 156  
Savolainen, Peter . . . . . 324  
Saxena, Nitin . . . . . 266  
Schaefer, Joseph T. . . . . 125  
Scharf, Caleb A. . . . . 205  
Scharmer, Goran B. . . . . 310  
Schenk, Paul M. . . . . 276  
Scher, Steven J. . . . . 186  
Schettler, Ted . . . . . 36  
Schiestl, Florian . . . . . 56  
Schimmel, David . . . . . 291  
Schizophrenia . . . . . 195, 301  
Schlegel, Robert . . . . . 202  
Schlundt, Jorgen . . . . . 6  
Schmirz, Ralf . . . . . 189  
Schodel, Rainer . . . . . 301  
Schoelson, Steven E. . . . . 137  
Schofield, Louis . . . . . 99  
Schofield, Oscar . . . . . 363  
Schon, Jan Hendrik . . . . . 214  
Schuch, Raymond . . . . . 115  
Schultz, Adolph . . . . . 329  
Schwadron, Nathan A. . . . . 301  
Schwartz, David A. . . . . 37  
Schwenke, David W. . . . . 85  
Scientific fraud . . . . . 37, 37, 214  
Scott, Edward W. . . . . 70  
Scott, Matthew P. . . . . 132  
Sea squirts . . . . . 254  
Seals . . . . . 308  
Searles, Debra J. . . . . 51  
Seeds . . . . . 126, 132  
Segal-Lieberman, Gabriella . . . . . 14  
Segransan, Damien . . . . . 381  
Segura, Teresa L. . . . . 372  
Seidenberg, Mark S. . . . . 134  
Sejvar, James J. . . . . 198  
Selectins . . . . . 147  
Selenium . . . . . 134  
Self-awareness . . . . . 118  
Seltzer, Geoffrey O. . . . . 349  
Semiconductors . . . . . 29, 286, 309  
Send, Uwe . . . . . 362  
Sengco, Mario R. . . . . 344  
Sept. 11 . . . . . 221  
Severson, David . . . . . 57  
Seveso . . . . . 77  
Sex differences . . . . . 4, 78  
Sex ratios . . . . . 230  
Sexual abuse . . . . . 59  
Sexual behavior . . . . . 59, 78, 125, 186, 237, 356  
Sexual selection . . . . . 117, 293



- Shao, Zhengzhong . . . . . 100  
 Shape-memory . . . . . 200  
 Shara, Michael M. . . . . 394  
 Sharks . . . . . 232, 237  
 Sharp, Phillip A. . . . . 93  
 Sharpe, Richard M. . . . . 3  
 Sheehan, Daniel P. . . . . 51, 286  
 Sheep . . . . . 182, 221  
 Sheiner, Lewis . . . . . 379  
 Shen, Guanjun . . . . . 387  
 Shen-Miller, Jane . . . . . 132  
 Sheppard, Scott S. . . . . 69  
 Shiffman, Saul . . . . . 340  
 Shigley, James E. . . . . 91  
 Shim, Jae-Hyuck . . . . . 142  
 Shimizu-Sato, Sae . . . . . 285  
 Shipworms . . . . . 72  
 Shiviji, Mahmood . . . . . 233  
 Shock waves . . . . . 358  
 Shocked minerals . . . . . 115  
 Short, Roger V. . . . . 21  
 Shulsky, Martha . . . . . 400  
 Shumway, Sandra . . . . . 345  
 Sicardy, Bruno . . . . . 148  
 Sicherer, Scott . . . . . 40  
 Silicon . . . . . 286  
 Silicone rubber . . . . . 198  
 Silkworms . . . . . 100  
 Silverstein, Melvin J. . . . . 243  
 Simmons, Daniel L. . . . . 181  
 Simonetti, Joel . . . . . 234  
 Simonson, Bruce M. . . . . 115  
 Simpson, Roger . . . . . 166  
 Sinervo, Barry . . . . . 293  
 Singh, Bal Ram . . . . . 86  
 Siva-Jothy, Michael . . . . . 6  
 Skin . . . . . 163  
 Sleep . . . . . 38, 77, 132, 152  
 Slingerland, Rudy L. . . . . 221  
 Sloan Digital Sky Survey . . . . . 244  
 Slotkin, Theodore A. . . . . 163  
 Small intestine . . . . . 382  
 Smalley, Richard E. . . . . 357  
 Smallpox . . . . . 21, 22  
 Smells . . . . . 56  
 Smillie, Robert C. . . . . 265  
 Smith, Jennifer S. . . . . 293  
 Smith, Leonard A. . . . . 86  
 Smitherman, David . . . . . 218  
 Smoking . . . . . 125, 163, 190, 340  
 Snakes . . . . . 86  
 Snow, Allison . . . . . 99  
 Snyder, Solomon H. . . . . 381  
 Socha, John J. . . . . 86  
 Social behavior . . . . . 4, 77, 147, 324  
 Soft gamma-ray repeaters . . . . . 189  
 Solar energy . . . . . 84, 212  
 Solar flares . . . . . 30  
 Solar system, formation . . . . . 131  
 Solar Telescope . . . . . 310  
 Solar wind . . . . . 30, 342  
 Solin, Stuart A. . . . . 5  
 Somers, Eric . . . . . 340  
 Somers, Virend K. . . . . 153  
 Sonoluminescence . . . . . 125  
 Soot . . . . . 253  
 Sorin, Anna Bess . . . . . 78  
 Soto, Ana . . . . . 230  
 Sound . . . . . 94, 168  
 Space debris . . . . . 269, 318  
 Space elevator . . . . . 218  
 Spafford, Eugene H. . . . . 69  
 Spalter, Harold F. . . . . 198  
 Species, introduced . . . . . 85, 341  
 Spectroscopy . . . . . 84  
 Speech . . . . . 94, 134  
 Speidel, Hannes . . . . . 163  
 Speidel, Markus O. . . . . 163  
 Speleothems . . . . . 174  
 Spencer, John . . . . . 326  
 Spergel, David N. . . . . 195, 390  
 Sperm . . . . . 20, 189, 216, 293, 333, 373  
 Spiders . . . . . 100  
 Spinal injuries . . . . . 296  
 Spindles . . . . . 312  
 Splet, Alan . . . . . 170  
 Splinting . . . . . 205  
 Split-brain studies . . . . . 118  
 Stadler, Richard H. . . . . 213  
 Stamler, Jonathan S. . . . . 30  
 Stanberry, Lawrence . . . . . 399  
 Standard model . . . . . 371  
 Stanley, H. Eugene . . . . . 116  
 Starbirth . . . . . 277  
 Stardust mission . . . . . 77  
 Stars . . . . . 269, 277, 381  
 Statistical mechanics . . . . . 51  
 Statistics . . . . . 116  
 Stegosaurus . . . . . 270  
 Steiner, Kim . . . . . 57  
 Stem cells . . . . . 69, 334, 365  
 Stephens, David W. . . . . 373  
 Stereocilia . . . . . 158  
 Sterilization . . . . . 358  
 Stern, S. Alan . . . . . 190  
 Sternberg, Paul . . . . . 229  
 Stone Age tools . . . . . 189  
 Strassmann, Joan . . . . . 8  
*Streptococcus* . . . . . 326  
 Stress . . . . . 237  
 Stringer, Christopher B. . . . . 19, 387  
 Stroeve, Julianne C. . . . . 400  
 Strohmayer, Tod . . . . . 24  
 Stroke . . . . . 61, 94, 147, 296  
 Stuart, David . . . . . 237, 355  
 Stucky, Galen D. . . . . 302  
 Stulik, David . . . . . 331  
 Stupp, Samuel . . . . . 29  
 Su, Xin-zhuan . . . . . 110  
 Sudan, Madhu . . . . . 117  
 Sudden infant death syndrome . . . . . 163  
 Sudden oak death . . . . . 70, 94  
 Sugden, Bill . . . . . 76  
 Sulston, John E. . . . . 229  
 Sundell, Hakan W. . . . . 164  
 Sunflowers . . . . . 126  
 Sunspots . . . . . 310  
 Superconductors . . . . . 158, 214, 325, 350  
 Supernovas . . . . . 244  
 Supersymmetry . . . . . 158  
 Surgery . . . . . 205, 212, 243, 315  
 Surh, Charles . . . . . 309  
 Suslick, Kenneth S. . . . . 126, 213  
 Suzman, Richard M. . . . . 308  
 Svoboda, Karel . . . . . 389  
 Swan, Shanna H. . . . . 333  
 Swank, Jean . . . . . 24  
 Swedlow, Tony . . . . . 45  
 Swerdlodd, Ronald . . . . . 374  
 Symbiosis . . . . . 72, 285  
 Syndrome X . . . . . 356  
 Szlyk, Janet P. . . . . 198
- T**
- T cells . . . . . 147, 309  
 Tabar, Jose . . . . . 233  
 Tabarrak, Alexander . . . . . 280  
 Tabazadeh, Azadeh . . . . . 340  
 Tadpoles . . . . . 318  
 Takano, Tadashi . . . . . 318  
 Tamoxifen . . . . . 243  
 Tanaka, Koichi . . . . . 229, 245  
 Tardiff, Robert G. . . . . 121  
 Tattersall, Ian . . . . . 187  
 Taylor, Jean E. . . . . 392  
 Tears . . . . . 244  
 Technology . . . . . 141  
 Tegmark, Max . . . . . 390  
 Teeth . . . . . 51, 190, 350  
 Tei, Chuwa . . . . . 365  
 Telewski, Frank . . . . . 132  
 Telfer, Stephen J. . . . . 332, 332  
 Teller, James T. . . . . 284  
 Telomeres . . . . . 75  
 Tender, Leonard M. . . . . 21  
 Terashima, Yuichi . . . . . 22  
 Terrorism . . . . . 69, 372  
 Tervahattu, Heikki . . . . . 361  
 Testosterone . . . . . 230  
 Tetrapods . . . . . 5  
 Teuber, Suzanne S. . . . . 40  
 Tewksbury, Joshua . . . . . 269  
 Thaler, Jennifer . . . . . 246  
 Thermodynamics . . . . . 51, 286  
 Theropods . . . . . 179  
 Thom, Stephen R. . . . . 214  
 Thorley-Lawson, David . . . . . 76  
 Thorsen, Todd A. . . . . 198  
 Thymus gland . . . . . 261  
 Tirlapur, Uday K. . . . . 316  
 Tirrell, Matthew . . . . . 133  
 Tumor necrosis factor . . . . . 136  
 Toepfer, Klaus . . . . . 165  
 Toll-like receptors . . . . . 36  
 Tomasello, Michael . . . . . 324  
 Tomatoes . . . . . 29  
 Tomsick, John . . . . . 299  
 Tononi, Giulio . . . . . 252  
 Tooley, Paul . . . . . 94  
 Toon, Owen B. . . . . 372  
 Tornadoes . . . . . 125  
 Tornqvist, Margareta . . . . . 120  
 Tour, James . . . . . 291  
 Toxic substances . . . . . 86, 214, 228  
 Tracy, Randall . . . . . 253  
 Traffic engineering . . . . . 302  
 Transgenic plants . . . . . 99  
 Transistors . . . . . 88, 88, 133  
 Transplants . . . . . 261  
 Trees . . . . . 70  
 Trimmer, Jeff . . . . . 378  
 Trinkaus, Erik . . . . . 148, 328  
 Trujillo, Chadwick A. . . . . 228  
 Tsutsui, Neil . . . . . 388  
 Tuite, David . . . . . 382  
 Tumosa, Charles . . . . . 142, 181  
 Turk, David J. . . . . 118  
 Turtles . . . . . 126
- U**
- U.S. Coast Guard . . . . . 232  
 Ulcers . . . . . 20, 94, 341, 382  
 Ultrasound . . . . . 355, 358  
 Umbilical cord . . . . . 261  
 United Nations . . . . . 237  
 Universe, expansion . . . . . 139  
 Uranium . . . . . 259  
 Uranus . . . . . 317  
 Urination . . . . . 270
- V**
- Vacca, William D. . . . . 164  
 Vaccination . . . . . 21, 323, 349  
 Valiev, Ruslan . . . . . 277  
 Van Cauter, Eve . . . . . 152  
 Van Der Marel, Roeland . . . . . 180, 339  
 van der Spoel, Aarnoud C. . . . . 374  
 van der Waals forces . . . . . 133  
 Van Horn, John D. . . . . 252  
 Van Rossum, Elisabeth F.C. . . . . 237  
 Van Valkenburgh, Blaire . . . . . 52  
 Varki, Ajit . . . . . 157  
 Vasconcelos, Heraldo L. . . . . 285  
 Vasectomy . . . . . 46  
 Veenstra, David . . . . . 171  
 Venus . . . . . 342  
 Veronesi, Umberto . . . . . 243  
 Vertebrates . . . . . 254  
 Very Large Telescope . . . . . 141  
 Vgontzas, Alexandros N. . . . . 153  
 Vicenzi, Edward . . . . . 90  
 Vickers, Paul . . . . . 339  
 Vinland . . . . . 109  
 Violence . . . . . 68, 165  
 Viruses . . . . . 22, 93, 196, 197  
 Vision . . . . . 251, 275, 350  
 Vitamin C . . . . . 46  
 Vitamin D . . . . . 230  
 Vitamin E . . . . . 46  
 Voevodsky, Vladimir . . . . . 117  
 Vogel, Petr . . . . . 12  
 Vogel, Steven . . . . . 86  
 Vogelbein, Wolfgang . . . . . 84  
 Vollrath, Fritz . . . . . 100  
 Vom Saal, Fred . . . . . 228  
 von Helversen, Otto . . . . . 57  
 Voting . . . . . 280  
 Voyager missions . . . . . 30
- W**
- Wagner, Alfred . . . . . 316  
 Wahlgren, Francis . . . . . 227  
 Wainright, Jesse . . . . . 156  
 Walker, Gretchen . . . . . 394  
 Walsberg, Glenn E. . . . . 253  
 Walsh, Christopher A. . . . . 312, 314  
 War . . . . . 90, 165, 237  
 Ward, W. Steven . . . . . 217  
 Warden, Glenn . . . . . 20  
 Warfarin . . . . . 190  
 Warner, Marcella . . . . . 77  
 Warner, Timothy D. . . . . 181  
 Warr, Gregory W. . . . . 294  
 Warts . . . . . 317  
 Water . . . . . 84, 101, 253  
 Waterbury, John B. . . . . 74  
 Waves . . . . . 381  
 Waxes . . . . . 237  
 Wayne, Robert K. . . . . 324  
 Weart, Spencer . . . . . 227  
 Weaver, Kimberly A. . . . . 300  
 Weaver, Lindell K. . . . . 214  
 Weeds . . . . . 99, 228  
 Weertman, Julia . . . . . 277  
 Wegner, Josef . . . . . 110  
 Weinberg, Martin D. . . . . 376  
 Weinberger, Myron H. . . . . 101  
 Weisman, R. Bruce . . . . . 357  
 Weiss, Christopher P. . . . . 372  
 Weitz, David A. . . . . 149  
 Wells . . . . . 325  
 West Nile virus . . . . . 197, 221  
 West, Peyton M. . . . . 117  
 Whales . . . . . 237, 308  
 Wharton, Tim . . . . . 27  
 White, Kristin . . . . . 203  
 Whitesides, George M. . . . . 134  
 Whitley, Rob . . . . . 269  
 Widdowson, Marc-Alain . . . . . 390  
 Wiedenhoef, Alex . . . . . 184  
 Wiese, Thomas E. . . . . 302  
 Wildfires . . . . . 291  
 Wiles, Andrew . . . . . 392  
 Wilkerson, John F. . . . . 11  
 Williams, Elizabeth S. . . . . 346  
 Williams, Eric . . . . . 309  
 Williams, W. Paul . . . . . 166  
 Wilson, Andrew S. . . . . 22  
 Wilson, David S. . . . . 187  
 Wilson, Kenneth . . . . . 182  
 Wilson, Lon . . . . . 27, 28  
 Wilson, Stephen . . . . . 26  
 Wimmer, Eckard . . . . . 22  
 Wine . . . . . 150  
 Wire . . . . . 350  
 Wolfe, Gary J. . . . . 347  
 Wolfe, Stephen . . . . . 250  
 Wolpoff, Milford H. . . . . 387  
 Wolves . . . . . 51  
 Wong, Bob . . . . . 56  
 Wood . . . . . 72, 184  
 Wood, Bernard . . . . . 19  
 Wooding, F. Beecher . . . . . 21  
 Woods, C. Geoffrey . . . . . 312  
 Woodwell, George M. . . . . 165  
 World Health Organization . . . . . 6  
 Worms . . . . . 110, 302  
 Wortman, Camille B. . . . . 157  
 Wright Jr., Kenneth P. . . . . 110  
 Wright, Fritz . . . . . 347  
 Writing . . . . . 355  
 Wyse, Rosemary F.G. . . . . 376
- X**
- X chromosome . . . . . 100  
 X-rays . . . . . 3, 26  
 Xist . . . . . 100  
 Xu, Jianfeng . . . . . 205  
 Xu, Xing . . . . . 179
- Y**
- Y chromosome . . . . . 254  
 Yabe, Takashi . . . . . 46  
 Warden, Glenn . . . . . 165  
 Yan, Shih-shiue . . . . . 165  
*Yanornis* . . . . . 349  
 Yeast . . . . . 285  
 Yee, Cassian . . . . . 309  
 Yeomans, Donald K. . . . . 69  
 Yin, Qingzhu . . . . . 131  
 Yin, Sophia . . . . . 78  
 Yip, Grant . . . . . 67  
 Yoon, Suk-Jin . . . . . 52  
 Yoshigahara, Nob . . . . . 108  
 Young, Allen . . . . . 69  
 Yu, Qingjuan . . . . . 57  
 Yuan, Chun-Su . . . . . 30  
 Yurek, Gregory H. . . . . 350  
 Yuste, Rafael . . . . . 389
- Z**
- Zappacosta, Luca . . . . . 83  
 Zeevart, Jan . . . . . 132  
 Zeitlin, Pamela . . . . . 141  
 Zeolites . . . . . 213  
 Zhang, Shuguang . . . . . 93  
 Zhou, Joey Y. . . . . 350  
 Zhou, Otto . . . . . 3  
 Zhou, Zheng . . . . . 203  
 Zimbelman, James R. . . . . 249  
 Zimmerman, Steven . . . . . 53  
 Zinner, Stephen H. . . . . 101  
 Zircon crystals . . . . . 204  
 Zondervan, Ingrid . . . . . 105  
 Zubarev, Eugene . . . . . 29  
 Zwiebel, Laurence . . . . . 211

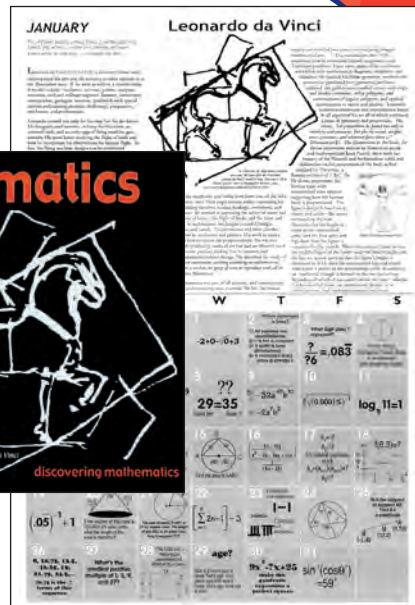
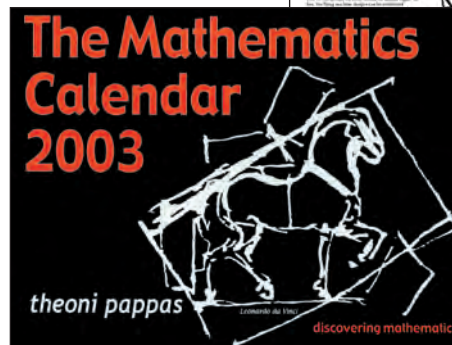
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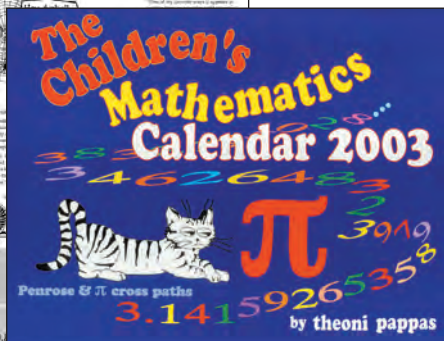
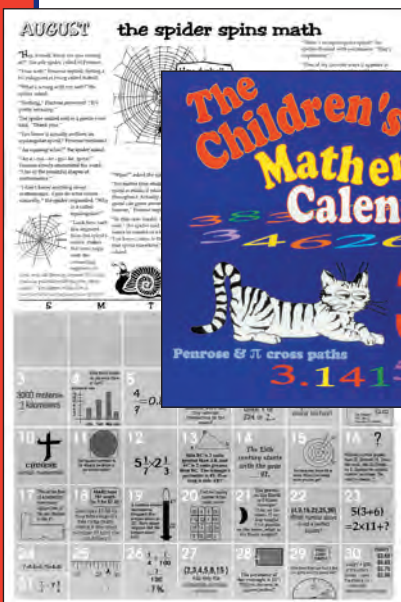
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