

August 29, 1962

Dr. Hewson Swift
Department of Zoology
The University of Chicago
Chicago 37, Illinois

Dear Hew:

Thank you for consulting me about the questions that you raised in your letter of August 10. I started to frame a specific reply and then realized I might be able to save time for similar occasions in the future by writing it up in more general terms, so I have done this in the form of the enclosed sheet entitled "Addendum to SCITEL". Also enclosed is the SCITEL proposal and a page or two of some other notes I have written on the information problem from time to time.

If there is an opportunity to do some bold experimentation in scientific communication, I hope you will take advantage of it - I was glad to notice your own sensitivity about "complicating the biological literature with yet another journal".

At the foot of "Miniscitel" I refer to the probable necessity of subcontracting the managerial work of such an experiment. I am doing all that I can to push the recognition of this as a governmental responsibility, and perhaps some year we may have some real help in that direction. Meanwhile, the AIBS and even Biological Abstracts seem to me very feeble indeed, and I have been channeling some of my own effort through Gene Garfield's company, the Institute for Scientific Information (which you may know as Current Contents) as one of the more imaginative and energetic activities in biological documentation. Handling the "Miniscitel" for cell biology is perhaps a little out of the usual line for Garfield, but he does have all the basic resources for it, and I would be glad to add my own persuasion to urging him to consider a proposal from you, if that were the direction you decided to take.

You might note that the physicists have a system somewhat analogous to a repository in the way they handle Physical Review and Physical Review Letters.

You asked about our video spectrometry system. A couple of weeks ago we turned on the video sensing and ratio analysis segment. This compares video lines from any two specified points on the target plate, delays one with respect to the other so that they can be superimposed, logs each channel, and displays the difference as the log of the ratio between the two video lines. It actually works! So we are using this as a double beam ratio recording spectrophotometer by projecting spectra onto the target plate, half the field

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being reserved as a reference. The first full scale application in hand will be a rather heavy terrestrial one -- we are just installing an analytical Spinco ultracentrifuge and are mounting the video head for on-line analysis of DNA spinning in cesium chloride gradients. The microscope spectrometry is coming along too, but Caspersson is promising some improvements in the Zeiss optics, particularly from the standpoint of chromatic.

Sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

cc: Dr. Heinz Herrmann
Enclosures
JL:edf

bc: Dr. Garfield

Enclosures: Xerox on Miniscitel
Mimeo of Memo on SCITEL - A Central Scientific Communication System
Xerox first page of Notes on a Technical Information System by JL