

SOCIETY

*Publishing and
Perishing*

"Confronting the Journal Publication Crisis: A Proposal for a Council of Social Science Editors" by James L. McCartney, in *The American Sociologist* (Aug. 1976), American Sociological Association, 1722 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

If rising production costs and dwindling income do not kill off the sociology journal within 10 years, the failure to provide current information to scholarly readers may do so, writes *Sociological Quarterly* editor McCartney.

Sociology-journal publishing is grossly inefficient, even when compared with other academic publications. Most sociology journals are small (under 2,000 pages a year), and their average manuscript rejection rate is high (82 per cent for 39 journals surveyed). An academic sociologist, compelled by a tightening job market to "publish or perish," may spend a year submitting his manuscript to various journals before it is finally accepted, then wait another year before publication. Yet there are 177 unrelated journals of sociology today, each with its own style and requirements. As a result, the time and money spent by a scholar preparing a manuscript for submission increases with each rejection. Some do not appear in print until four years after they were first presented.

McCartney fears that it may never be possible to make the printed sociology journal an economical and efficient mode of communication. He suggests a council of editors to plan for a shift to the "electronic journal" of the future, when sociologists communicate by computer, perhaps the only answer to the current information bottleneck.

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*Trouble for
Technology*

"Has the U.S. Lost Its Initiative in Technological Innovation?" by Jerome B. Wiesner, in *Technology Review* (July-Aug. 1976), Room E19-430, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

The answer to the question posed by the title of this article by MIT president Wiesner is "no, not yet," but the trends are unfavorable. If the United States appears to have lost the ability to innovate rapidly enough to cope with the growing complexity and scale of current problems such as chronic unemployment and rural to urban population shifts, it is not for lack of good technical ideas.

The slowdown in the pace and quality of innovation and productivity

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increases can be traced to several other factors, notably the shift toward replacement technology. "New generations of processes and devices—new energy sources, new transportation systems, new pollution controls—are usually far more complex and costly than those they replaced." They take longer to plan, develop, and construct, and thus their financing becomes increasingly more difficult for private industry.

Moreover, U.S. government policies (e.g., patent policies) often do not encourage industry to take advantage of new technology arising out of federally sponsored research and development. Government attempts to bar potential health hazards often impede the development and marketing of certain products, particularly pharmaceuticals and agricultural chemicals.

Withdrawal of Pentagon financing of basic research in 1970 damaged both basic and applied research, says Wiesner; major research universities that perform most of the fundamental and exploratory work leading to technological innovation now suffer from both reduced government subsidies and the pressures of inflation.

"The United States," Wiesner concludes, "has moved in recent years from a situation in which all our forces, commercial and public, encouraged the innovation which created our spectacular scientific and industrial capabilities to a situation in which there are ever-increasing deterrents to creative change."

Genetic Research And Social Ills

"XYY: The Dangers of Regulating Research by Adverse Publicity" by Bernard D. Davis; and, "The XYY Male: The Making of a Myth" by Jon Beckwith and Larry Miller, in *Harvard Magazine* (Oct. 1976), P.O. Box 301, Uxbridge, Mass. 01569.

Last May, after a year of bad publicity and harassment, scientists abandoned a long-term research project at Harvard Medical School on genetic abnormality and behavior. Dr. Davis, professor of bacterial physiology at the medical school, defends the genetic project; Beckwith, professor of microbiology and molecular genetics at Harvard, and Miller, a third-year medical student, deplore it.

The research centered on the extremely small number of children born with three sex-determining chromosomes instead of the normal two. Investigators in several countries have found that the extra male chromosome pattern, shown as XYY, was 10 to 20 times more frequent in inmates of institutions for the criminally insane than in the general male population. This discovery prompted press accounts erroneously reporting that an extra male chromosome invariably causes excessive aggressiveness and "criminality."

The aborted Harvard study, which entailed the identification of XYY infants and then follow-up observation and therapy, was "in the