

◆ *A Viewpoint by Bradley Hundley*

Editor's Note: The Viewpoint below appeared in CBE Views, the predecessor to Science Editor, 10 years ago, when Bradley Hundley was president of the Council of Biology Editors (CBE). Since then, CBE has become CSE, and much else has changed. Nevertheless, Hundley's words retain much meaning.

By 1999 we want CBE to be the primary resource for authors and editors in the life sciences for information and guidance on the conventions, ethics, and legalities of publishing.

That's about four years in which to master the significant capacities of the "information superhighway". That phenomenon is analogous to more familiar technology, initially wondrous, now commonplace—the automobile.

Some of us are proficient travelers and are eagerly urging others to "get on the road". While others, having fully test-driven our calling cards, answering machines, faxes, and laptops, are only grudgingly ready to acknowledge that these technologies have speeded up and simplified our communications, expanded the ways and places in which we can work, given us the

capacity to go farther more confidently. In short, technologies have empowered us, but discomforted us.

Whether by America Online, Internet, Edunet, or CompuServe, we all must travel similar highways. But how fast we drive, what routes we take, how often we get off and follow an alternate route is up to us. As our driving confidence increases and we learn to navigate in traffic, avoid the potholes, observe the signposts, we are able to go further faster and access more from further reaches. "The world"—and all its information—"will be ours".

The challenge is to read the road map while maintaining control of the vehicle. There are information nodes all along this superhighway: groups, systems, data, conversations, intelligence, memories, ideas to use in drawing our individual maps and the collective CBE travel plan. The open road is an exhilarating prospect.

Our task as publishing professionals is to identify and use those sources, that information, those ideas that will increase our knowledge and simplify our communication. We must view the superhighway and the technological enhancements it proffers

as indispensable, time-saving information sources. We must capitalize on its immediacy, and learn to use it to deepen our experiences, to hone our sensibilities to human behavior, to appreciate the subtleties and complexities of scientific research and communication, and to educate our judgment.

We are the drivers. We must preserve the right, the obligation, to get off the road, take a detour, pause in the journey at any time, in any place, for any duration. We need time to assess, absorb, interpret, discard, assimilate these quantities of information in order to bring our experience and judgment to bear, in order to achieve our goal of being the primary resource to editors and authors.

As I merge cautiously but excitedly onto the superhighway, I have beside me a visible reminder of the need to prevent interconnectivity from obliterating individuality—a phoneless cord. ☎

Bradley Hundley
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