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Voices of the Next Generation

THE START OF 2012 PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE STOCK OF WHERE WE HAVE BEEN AND WHERE we are going at *Science*. Internet technology has been rapidly changing the way that scientists access information. This has advantages, allowing new content to be noticed around the globe as soon as it is published. But it also has disadvantages, making it easy for a scientist to receive only preselected information focused on his or her specialty. Because innovative breakthroughs often come from the intersection of disparate ways of thinking, scientists need to continually expose themselves to a broad range of disciplines and approaches. They also must work together as a community to build the strong scientific enterprise needed to create the paradigm-breaking innovations that will be required by an ever-more crowded and resource-limited world. How can we promote the wide-ranging conversations that will be necessary to meet these critical challenges?

We know from surveys that younger scientists primarily read our magazine online, finding specific articles from specialized searches, such as those on Google Scholar or PubMed. As a result, they often miss the valuable, community-building articles in *Science*'s News and Commentary sections, as well as exposure to research in other fields. Many of these young people are already actively engaging in conversations about the issues presented in *Science* on social media sites such as Facebook.* But to bring such conversations to a broader community of scientists, *Science* is providing a prominent space for young scientists in the front half of the print magazine with a new feature called NextGen VOICES. In this issue, we publish the first set of essays from young scientists who responded to our question: "How will the practice of science change in your lifetime?" We received answers from many nations and publish a selection in this issue, some in print (see p. 36) and many more online (www.scim.ag/NextGenResults). We also announce the next question in this series, with essays of 250 words or less due by 17 February: "What is your definition of a successful scientist? How has this definition changed between your mentor's generation and your own?" (see announcement on p. 36 and www.scim.ag/NextGen_2).

The short essays published this week come from young scientists in 18 nations: Austria, China, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom, and United States. The answers are encouraging, inasmuch as they dramatically illustrate the wisdom and energy of the next generation of the world's scientists, along with their strong shared culture. Many of the essays express a greatly increased need for interdisciplinary, collaborative science—calling for new mechanisms and better incentive systems that promote it. All in all, *Science* is very encouraged by the response, and we hope that this new feature will—along with new organizations like the Global Young Academy†—help to empower young scientists to play a larger role in both the scientific community and society.

Other new features at *Science* include two new mechanisms designed to encourage wider participation in the issues published by our magazine. Readers can now post comments on all Commentary, News, and Research content immediately after print publication (see www.comments.sciencemag.org). We also welcome Technical Comments that address core conclusions and methodologies, and will publish those as soon as possible (see www.sciencemag.org/site/feature/contribinfo/prep/gen_info.xhtml). We hope that all of these changes—NextGen VOICES, and the facilitation of both general and technical comments—will allow many more people, and especially young scientists, to participate more effectively in an increasingly global conversation on central issues. Only by heeding the voices of the next generation can we succeed in building a broad-based scientific community that can address the daunting challenges of our times—for in a very real sense, the future is in their hands. —Bruce Alberts

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*Over 190,000 "likes" on Facebook for *ScienceNow* and 65,000 for *Science*. †B. Alberts, *Science* **332**, 283 (2011).

