

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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Spring Meeting

The burgeoning products of our investigatory enthusiasm continue to plague those of your representatives who are responsible for the organization of the Spring Meetings with the Federation (Physiologist 8:3-5, 1965). The accompanying graph (Fig. 1) shows the number of abstracts accepted for the Spring Meetings from 1948-1967. The rate of increase averages about 3% per year and shows no sign of decreasing; rather the opposite. The number of papers actually programmed by the Society does not necessarily equal the number accepted, because some will be transferred to sessions of other societies and the APS will accept some papers transferred from other societies. The changes in the number transferred has varied primarily because of changes in the rules governing the submission of abstracts in the other societies. The Spring Meetings in 1967 will be the first in which more papers were transferred into the Physiology Sessions than transferred out. Also shown are the number of regular individual sessions for the same time period. This datum is actually more important than the total number of papers submitted because it is the number of separate sessions that determines the number of meeting rooms required. "Regular" sessions do not include symposia, which have averaged 5 per year over the last 5 years.

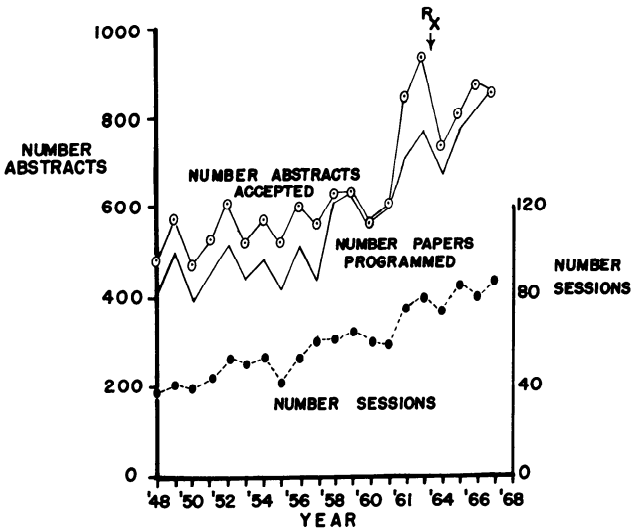


Fig. 1. Graph of total number of abstracts accepted by the APS (o-o) the number of papers actually programmed (—) and the total number of physiology sessions (●---●) for the years 1948 to 1967 inclusive. R_X indicates the institution of the restriction that a member's name can appear only once on the program.

This increase in the number of 10-minute papers submitted each year, in itself an encouraging indication of activity and interest in physiology, has this obvious disadvantage as a corollary, that the speaker-minutes must increase in proportion, unless the length of each presentation is shortened to less than ten minutes, which appears to be self-defeating. The number of speaker-minutes at the Spring Meetings can be extended by:

1. Increasing the duration of the Spring Meetings to more than five days. This expedient appears universally unsatisfactory.

2. Increasing the number of simultaneous individual sessions in physiology from the present level of about 9. Even now there are conflicts of interest with different topics being discussed at the same time and if the number of simultaneous sessions were to be increased, this would be exacerbated. In addition, the total number of rooms seating more than 200 that would be required would become greater than available any place but Atlantic City. Certainly the present number of meeting rooms demanded by the Federation is not available in any but two cities now.

3. Increasing the number of meetings per year. Obviously there could hardly be more than one Federation Meeting per year, but the Society could take more advantage of its present two meetings per year. The Fall Meetings are still relatively uncrowded and the membership should be encouraged to present their work there. In the more distant future, when the Fall Meetings become too congested, it should be possible to hold more than two meetings per year, or to have meetings of sub units of the Society, either geographical or topical.

Another alternative is to prevent the increase or even to decrease the number of physiological papers presented orally. Basically there are two approaches to doing this, an egalitarian and selective. 1) The egalitarian is based on the premise that each member has the unalienable right to present a paper at the Spring Meeting without review by his peers. Therefore, if there is to be any restriction on the number of papers presented, it must be a limit on the number of opportunities each individual member has to present a paper without considering the topic or quality of the paper. The Society, with its long tradition of democracy has always elected this approach, or rather has seized upon it as the least of many evils. 2) The selective approach holds that if the number of presentations must be limited, the better papers should have the privilege, the total number being set by the number of available accommodations. The problem arises in who is to do the selecting.

At the Fall Meeting of 1963, owing to the known limitations on meeting rooms in Chicago for the then forthcoming Spring Meeting of 1964, the Society voted to accept the following temporary restriction on their right to present papers: (Physiologist 6: 318, 1963).

"A person's name can appear only once (on the program). An APS regular, retired or honorary member must be one of the authors." In the Business Meeting in the Spring of 1964, the officers having had some

experience with the operation of this ruling and the membership having suffered under it, the Society voted to retain the restriction permanently (Physiologist 7: 45, 1964). The therapeutic effect of the restriction can be easily seen in Figure 1. The rate of increase has not been altered however, and even such continued self-restraint on the part of the membership will not solve the problem much longer and new measures will be required.

Possible extensions of the egalitarian solution are to limit presentations at the Spring Meetings to members only, and when that fails, to limit a member to the presentation of less than one paper per Spring Meeting on the average, for example to two papers every three years.

A selective solution has been applied by the American Society of Biological Chemists. Any member of that Society wanting to present a paper orally at the Spring Meeting in 1965 submitted twenty five copies of an abstract. These papers were grouped according to topic and sent to 15 to 20 members of that Society, who had previously agreed to act in this capacity, and ranked in order of their preference. Only those papers receiving the higher rankings were presented, although all were printed in the Federation Proceedings. About 40 per cent were not presented orally. This mechanism has the advantage of a large jury, but much may depend on the initial topic classification. There is of course a great deal of additional labor involved on the part of the panels and the executive staff. The procedure appears to have worked well in 1966 and is being applied again in 1967, however I hope you will make your own inquiries amongst your associates and see how satisfactory it appears, particularly to the junior people in the field. It is certainly possible that a member may have great difficulty getting an opportunity to present his work orally.

There is a possibility that if the membership of our Society were aware that quality judgments were going to be made about their abstracts, the papers would improve and some poorer ones might be withheld automatically.

It does not seem reasonable to expect that the number of papers will continue to rise at the same or a slightly increasing rate indefinitely. The population of the United States is not increasing this rapidly, nor is the financial support, and sooner or later the rate must slow down. It would be unfortunate to take solace in this comforting thought, because there are no indications that the end is in sight.

I hope that you will all give this matter your earnest attention. Any suggestions would be welcomed by Council.

Porter Programs

In 1921 Professor William T. Porter established an award supporting talented students training for careers in physiology. This award became known as the Porter Fellowship, was administrated by the APS and supported by funds from the Harvard Apparatus Company, which was also founded by Professor Porter. For many years this was one of a few scholarships available for predoctoral students in physiology, and was

highly sought after. Many distinguished scholars and teachers held it at one time. However, in recent years large scale government support of predoctoral training has made the Porter Fellowship less unusual, interest in it has lagged and the number of candidates has decreased. This led to special efforts on the part of the Porter Fellowship Committee and Council to alter the terms of the award in order to make it more competitive with government fellowships, but the results have not been entirely satisfactory. The need for this type of fellowship has decreased.

Therefore, after correspondence with the Harvard Apparatus Company, Council has established the Porter Physiology Development Program for the purpose of stimulating and assisting in the improvement of underdeveloped American departments of physiology, to take the place of the Porter Fellowship. The Harvard Apparatus Company has enthusiastically endorsed this change and has offered to increase substantially its financial contribution, supplying funds for the purchase of critical equipment as well as for stipends and training of staff. It also seems likely that considerable additional support can be obtained for this type of program from foundations. Unfortunately this means that the Porter Fellowship has come to an end after 46 years. Council has made this decision with the greatest reluctance and only after several successive Councils have become convinced that the fellowship program can no longer be maintained or transformed into a unique scholarship. Of course the present Porter Fellow will continue to receive support as agreed under the fellowship.

The Porter Physiology Development Program will be administered under a subcommittee of the Education Committee.

