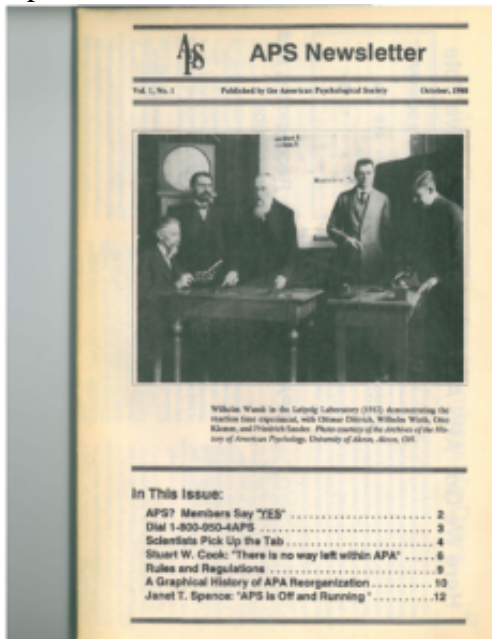


Letter from the Editor: A New Chapter for the *Observer*

April 29, 2022



OCTOBER 1988: The [debut APS Newsletter](#), soon to be renamed the *Observer*, shows Wilhelm Wundt and colleagues at the Leipzig Laboratory, the first lab devoted to psychological studies, in 1912.

The [first issue of the APS Observer](#) was published in October 1988. It was 12 pages long, black ink on newsprint, and bursting with the righteous pride of the 400 visionary professionals who just months before had voted to break off from the American Psychological Association as an independent organization supporting “scientifically-oriented psychology.”

“The fledgling American Psychological Society—not a quite month old as this is being written—is off to an auspicious start,” wrote Janet T. Spence in her inaugural Presidential Column. Plans were being laid to produce the society’s first journal, [Psychological Science](#); to convene the first APS convention the following June; and to recruit like-minded academic and research psychologists who wished to preserve “the unity of psychology as a research-oriented discipline,” Spence wrote.

Over the years, the *Observer* grew and evolved with APS more broadly, which rebranded as the international-facing Association for Psychological Science in 2006. *Psychological Science* launched in 1990 and quickly became established as the best-in-class journal it remains today. APS’s five other journals followed, from [Current Directions in Psychological Science](#) in 1992 to, most recently, [Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science](#) in 2018. Our convention became a can’t-miss annual event that attracts thousands of psychological scientists from all subfields and corners of the world. Our membership eventually exceeded 30,000—just as the founders had projected back in that very first issue of the *Observer*.

As for the *Observer*, the black-and-white member newsletter added a second color and, step by incremental step, upped its frequency, coverage, heft, and sophistication with the debut of a four-color

magazine in the early 2000s. By then, APS's science was informing audiences well beyond the membership, thanks to the [website that went live in the late 1990s](#). Among other achievements, articles covering topics from [happiness](#) and [smiling](#) to [procrastination](#) and [burnout](#) went on to attract millions of readers online. Today, many years' worth of the collected *Observers* are on view along the hallways of the APS office in Washington, DC.



OBSERVER

Published by the American Psychological Society

Vol. 8, No. 5

September 1995

- ◆ **Unabomber contacts APS member...**
Infamous terrorist sends UC-Berkeley professor copy of manifesto 3
- ◆ **NIH Lecture Series...**
Seminars focus on link between health and human behavior 6
- ◆ **On the Validity of Psychology Experiments...**
APS Convention keynote speaker John Kihlstrom discusses the investigator-subject relationship and improving experiment validity 10
- ◆ **Top Universities Ranked...**
Psychology programs evaluated on output and impact based on data from literature citations 24
- ◆ **APS Call for Papers...**
..... Centerfold insert

Sandra Scarr Is APS President-Elect

Bjork and Sechrest become newest Board members

Continuing the tradition of electing nationally known leaders who epitomize the ideal of service across the breadth of scientific psychology, APS members have given a collective nod to Sandra Scarr as President-Elect and Robert A. Bjork and Lee Sechrest as members of the Society's Board of Directors.

Each of these distinguished individuals is widely recognized for their scientific accomplishments, which span basic and applied research ranging from genetics and social environment to learning and memory to health services research. But in addition, each has also spent an enormous amount of time working to advance the field in other ways, such as serving on peer review committees and on advisory panels for federal agencies and the National Academy of Sciences.



Sandra Scarr

SEE ELECTIONS ON PAGE 4

Astronaut Draws Attention to Psychology, Communication

Astronaut Norman Thagard spent 115 days in space, discusses research issues critical to successful long-duration spaceflight

When physician/astronaut Norman Thagard touched down aboard Space Shuttle Atlantis on July 7, he also landed himself at least two enviable positions in the record books. He was the first American to have ridden on board a Russian launch vehicle—on March 14, 1995, en route to the Russian SpaceLab Mir—but more personally impressive was his 115-day stint in space, most of it aboard the Russian space station. Thagard's marathon feat also has renewed NASA's focus on psychological issues of long-duration spaceflight.

While Russian cosmonauts have endured much longer missions, Thagard broke the American 84-day record established during the Skylab missions in 1973 and 1974. The mission also entailed the first docking of a US space shuttle with the Mir space station.

And, whether it was intentional or not, when Thagard, 52, landed at Kennedy Space Center, he had stirred up a



Norman Thagard, pictured in a cosmonaut space suit, trained in Russia more than a year before the historic flight.

SEE NASA ON PAGE 8

INSIDE

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| Psychology in Perspective | 5 |
| Member Contributions | 27 |
| APS Fellows | 37 |
| Call for APS Nominations | 41 |

Departments

| | |
|--------------------------|----|
| Presidential Column | 2 |
| Internet Connection | 14 |
| How To - | |
| Use the APA Style Guide | 16 |
| People | 26 |
| Teaching Tips - | |
| Use of Extra Credit | 34 |
| Members in the News | 36 |
| Obituaries | 38 |
| The Student Notebook | 42 |
| Organizational Profile - | |
| Study of Social Issues | 46 |
| Announcements | 47 |
| Employment Bulletin | 51 |

American Psychological Society ♦ 1010 Vermont Ave, NW ♦ Suite 1100 ♦ Washington, DC 20005-4907 ♦ 202-783-2077

SEPTEMBER 1995: The *Observer* now exceeds 50 pages, including employment ads. This issue features the first of many articles on the psychological aspects of space exploration.



APS Receives \$1 Million Gift

Myers Fund to Support Teaching and Public Understanding of Psychological Science

Noted textbook author David Myers has pledged \$1 million to the American Psychological Society to establish an endowed fund that aims "to enhance the teaching and public understanding of psychological science for students and the lay public, in the United States, Canada, and worldwide."

This is the first such endowment received by APS and it is seen as a giant step forward for the Society and for the field more generally.

The gift is being made by the David and Carol Myers Foundation, which receives and will distribute all author royalties from Myers' general audience books and his introductory psychology texts. The first \$200,000 is in the fund, and the rest will be made in installments over the next few years. Awards will be made from the income generated by the gift. In the meantime, APS is committing significant start-up

funds to get the program going immediately, rather than waiting until the gift begins to generate income. Myers has indicated that he also is considering supplementing the early funds.

A FOUNDING PRINCIPLE

"Since its inception, APS has had a strong commitment to the teaching of psychology," said President Henry L. Roediger, III, of Washington University in St. Louis. "This generous gift will aid us in developing many more activities. It leads us strongly



Myers

SEE MYERS ON PAGE 15

>> Heading in the Right Direction

Basic Research in Psychology Leads to Safer Brain Surgery



Photo by Jeff Oersman

A technique originally developed to study false memory helps reduce risk of neurosurgery by more accurate "mapping."

By DAVE WILSON
Observer Correspondent

The man in the mask holds up a piece of cardboard and demands that the man lying on the table identify the item pictured. The man on the table is trying to comply, but he's groggy, nervous, and increasingly incoherent. That's understandable, since he is missing a chunk of his skull about as big as the width of your hand.

Another man in a mask is standing near the exposed brain and manipulating a set of wires attached to the pulsing organ, which is naked but for a scattering of tiny numbered pieces of sticky tape across its surface. The masked man moving the wires around

shouts out numbers to the masked man waving the picture around as minute electric currents pass through various parts of the brain. Different pictures — a pencil, a dog, a lamp — are held up before the man on the table and the men with masks note the poor fellow's responses as the process is repeated over and over.

Horrible as the scene is, the man on the table is not being tortured. At least, that's not the point of the exercise. The man on the table has something terribly wrong with him — perhaps epilepsy or a tumor — and hopes this unpleasant procedure will help cure him. The men in masks are part of surgical team desperately trying to map a

SEE HEADING ON PAGE 17

www.psychologicalscience.org/observer

APRIL 2004: A generous gift from the David & Carol Myers Foundation continues to support the teaching and public understanding of psychological science through grants and other activities.



Observer

Volume 19, Number 1 ♦ January 2006

PUBLISHED BY THE ASSOCIATION FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE

Psychology by Design



From cockpits to craftsmanship, psychological scientists are at the forefront of really intelligent design.

www.psychologicalscience.org/observer

JANUARY 2006: APS's new name affirms its commitment to "the science of psychology," writes past president [Robert W. Levenson](#). An in-depth feature explores "really really intelligent design."

K. Lee Herring, APS's first director of communications, recalls deciding as *Observer* editor "to align the publication's physical appearance with the youthful energy of the then-new APS." He favored bold new images depicting contemporary news, a stark contrast to the covers that "typically featured 'dusty-looking' archival photos of only early 20th-century male psychologists," he said. Wishing to appeal to APS's growing non-psychologist policymaker and public audiences, Herring believed "acknowledgement of psychology's 'shoulders of giants,' could be achieved without the covers' exclusive focus on 'dead scientists.'"

That forward-looking perspective continues to guide APS and the *Observer* today. In fact, [this issue](#) of the *Observer* represents another significant leap ahead: It's our final print issue as we transition to an all-digital format that will serve you more effectively.

We are thrilled with this development. Transitioning away from print, with its long lead times and expensive printing and mailing costs, enables us to give [APS members](#) more for your membership dollars. You will benefit from more timely and responsive reporting on the issues that affect your work, and a more robust web presence, including new digital products like the podcasts we started in 2020, that help you readily find and engage with the content you need, when you need it.

APS AND PSYCHONOMIC SOCIETY JOIN FORCES

Observer

Vol. 26, No. 2 • February 2013

WHY

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www.psychologicalscience.org/observer

FEBRUARY 2013: The making of a classic: Eric Jaffe's look at neural ties between social and physical pain remains the [*Observer's* most popular article of all time](#), with almost 250,000 readers online.

APS and Open Science, by Alan Kraut

Observer

Vol. 28, No. 10 • December 2015

USING SOUND TO GET AROUND
Discoveries in Human Echolocation

a publication of
aps
ASSOCIATION FOR
PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE

www.psychologicalscience.org/observer

DECEMBER 2015: Lore Thaler explores echolocation as a paradigm to “study neuroplasticity from several disciplinary perspectives.” Alan Kraut recounts APS’s journey so far with open science.

2018 APS Janet Taylor Spence Award Recipients

Observer

Vol. 31, No. 5 • May/June 2018

THE MANY SHAPES OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE

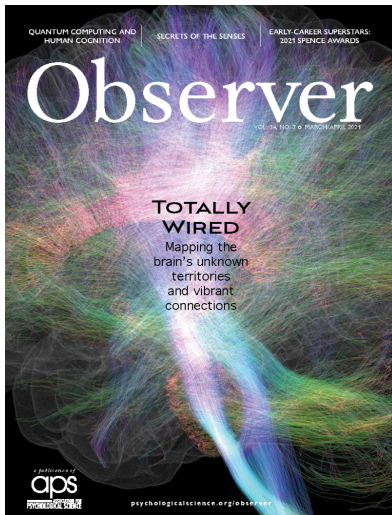
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PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE

www.psychologicalscience.org/observer

MAY/JUNE 2018: Reflecting the science's many practical applications, this issue profiles researchers whose work bolsters conservation efforts, makes products more usable, improves safety, and more.



MARCH/APRIL 2021: The *Observer*'s new thematic approach explores topics in depth, including neuroscience research in this issue. Features cover the [connectome](#), secrets of the senses, [quantum computing](#), and much more.

The environmental impact of print isn't lost on us either, and no longer printing and mailing the millions of pages that constitute each year's volume will help us do our part to reduce the impact of deforestation, pollution from paper mills, and harmful chemicals used in printer inks. Environmental stewardship is important to APS, as is ensuring our long-term ability to serve future generations of psychological scientists around the globe.

In short, the new, all-digital *Observer* will deliver even more of the content APS members need to advance science, improve human welfare, and prepare for a rapidly changing future. Plus, if you like the existing bimonthly format, you'll still be able to access the magazine as a collective whole online—with all of its feature and department articles intact—starting with the July/August issue.

We welcome your feedback on this development—and your ideas for making it even more successful—and would love to hear from you: apsobserver@psychologicalscience.org. In the meantime, feel free to browse the entire *Observer* archive (35 volumes and counting) at psychologicalscience.org/observer.

— Leah Thayer
Editor, the Observer
APS Senior Director of Communications

Feedback on this article? Email apsobserver@psychologicalscience.org or scroll down to comment.