/CORRESPONDENCE

Jurassic Park

To the editor:

I have received your Last Word column, "The Message Behind the Movie" (*Bio/Technology* **11**:756, June). As Alfred Hitchcock used to say, "It's just a movie." And in this case, it's a dinosaur movie. Based on a dinosaur book. Yet William Bains is of the opinion that "some people may take it as fact."

I find no reason to believe they will. They haven't so far. The book is labeled as fiction. Millions of readers, including the great majority of biotechnologists, have enjoyed it in that spirit. Many have told me so themselves.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

When I spoke to the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on April 6 of this year, I was asked, "Will this movie spark a fear of (bio)technology?"

I answered: "No ... I doubt very much that anyone will be afraid of biotechnology as a result of the movie. I think a lot of people may be afraid of dinosaurs. To the extent that you have this fear, you're on your own."

Frankensteinphobia: The inability to concentrate on this week's experiment because last week's might be sneaking up on you.

The remark was greeted by laughter—the only appropriate response.

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Another Look

To the editor:

With regard to "Desktop Molecular Modeling: Another Look" (*Bio/Technology* **11**:472, April), several clarifications are in order.

The docking features, which the author describes as a "limitation" of the software, must be considered in the context of both functionality and price. With only a relatively small investment in molecular modeling software, a researcher can use HyperChem to perform docking studies using a personal computer. Through the addition of user-specified scripts and Windows applications, the user can customize HyperChem to develop a full-featured docking tool. One of the strengths of HyperChem is that its open architecture supports development of customized applications to meet specific research needs. This approach gives the researcher the freedom to develop a sophisticated research tool on an easy-to-use software platform.

The author incorrectly states that HyperChem is unique in its ability to perform conformational analysis. This feature is common to most of the "higher" end molecular modeling packages. Further, the author's reference to conceptualizing molecules "either in the classic Newtonian physics balls and stick model or in terms of 20th century quantum mechanics" is misleading. The author implies that one method is computational and the other a visualization method, while in reality, both are computational approaches.

Using HyperChem, a researcher can perform mixed-mode calculations, as the author points out. What was not conveyed in the article is the investigational power this capability confers. With mixed mode calculations, the researcher can perform a more computationally intensive semi-empirical calculation on a specified region of interest while treating the rest of the molecule classically. The benefit is that larger systems can be analyzed without losing the detailed information for the area of interest.

In providing a context for technical information, we shared with the author some pertinent background information on product development strategy and possible future directions for HyperChem. As those familiar with the software development process recognize, strategies and product implementations can and will change. Thus, the reader should not infer future directions and products from the information contained in this review. As the author noted, Autodesk is indeed "committed to developing responsive and easily accessible" scientific software and to supporting its expanding customer base in both research and education. Future products from the Autodesk Scientific Modeling Division will reflect this commitment.

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Old Reflexes

To the editor:

I read with interest your editorial "Please, Mr. Clinton" (*Bio/Technology* **11**:131, February). As I was reading the section, "Be careful of old reflexes," I shook my head and thought to myself that most of the business community still had not grasped a very simple lesson, namely, protecting and preserving our environment can be very good for business. Painting Mr. Gore as an anti-business, environmental extremist only deepens public perception, and in some cases justified, that the corporate world's only interest is their profit margins, and that public safety and public welfare are way down on the list. As long as business sees environmental protection as a burden and an obstacle to overcome rather than an opportunity, the public will always look at business with a skeptical eye.

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Invective and Disinformation

To the editor:

As one of those environmentalists who does regularly read *Bio/Technology*, and who generally finds Russ Hoyle's column at least informative, I was astounded by the level of invective and indeed disinformation in the June issue (*Bio/Technology* **11**:666, June).