

University News:

DR. W. C. E. HIGGINSON has been appointed to the third chair of chemistry from January 1, 1967. Mr. D. W. Beard will be director of the Computation Laboratory from January 1, 1967.

London

THE title of professor of child health and growth has been conferred on Dr. J. M. Tanner, in respect of his post at the Institute of Child Health.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

DR. V. F. WEISSKOPF, formerly director-general of the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) until his return to the M.I.T. last January, has been appointed head of the Department of Physics as from February 1, 1967, in succession to Prof. W. W. Bouchner.

Stirling

THE following appointments have been made as part of the academic plan for the initial stages of the development of the University: Dr. R. P. Bell, professor of chemistry; Dr. F. R. Bradbury, professor of industrial science; Mr. M. F. A. Harrison, professor of physics; Mr. F. G. T. Holliday, professor of biology; Dr. W. D. Munn, professor of mathematics.

Hull Appointments

SIR BRIAN WINDEYER, professor of radiology (therapeutic) in the University of London, has been appointed to the Council for Scientific Policy, in succession to Sir Charles Dodds, who resigned from the council in May.

PROF. I. S. ZEDGINIDZE has been appointed director of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Division of Life Sciences, in succession to Prof. N. Saito.

Announcements

THE Perkin Centenary Trust has announced the award of scholarships and travel grants for the academic year 1967-68. The scholarships are open to school leavers and can be used either in conjunction with a local authority grant or independently thereof, and are intended to help young people employed in British industrial companies concerned with colouring matters to follow a course of higher education. The travel grants are intended for teachers at universities, technical colleges or other institutions, and should enable them to visit industrial establishments manufacturing colouring matters or otherwise engaged with them. The closing date for applications for both kinds of awards is May 1, 1967, and enquiries should be addressed to: The Secretary, The Perkin Centenary Trust, c/o The Chemical Society, Burlington House, London, W.1.

CORRESPONDENCE

Preprints Galore

SIR,—The leading article, "Preprints Galore", which appeared in the issue of August 27 unfairly represents the aims and function of the Information Exchange Groups. A reader not directly exposed to IEG would presume that its sole purpose is to promote more rapid circulation of completed manuscripts already submitted for publication. Although many of the IEG reports fall into this category, the IEG concept embraces a considerably more comprehensive aim—to put scientists working in the same field into continuous and rapid communication. Thus there is no restriction on the type of material that can be submitted. Examples of the use to which the service has been put include critical comments on previously submitted material, brief notes confirming the work of other investigators, suggestions on terminology, and other items that would not normally be submitted for publication in a regular journal.

The development of IEG has involved creation of seven groups so far. Each group is under the direction of its own chairman, and each chairman has a somewhat different concept as to how his group should function. The result has been that some of the groups are quite large, and embrace a broad area; others have relatively few members and deal with more circumscribed problems. The relative merits and disadvantages of the different approaches remain to be evaluated. Generalities about IEG are not warranted unless these differences are considered. Moreover, it should be recognized that the IEG phenomenon is still in an experimental stage, and there has been little opportunity as yet to cope with the unforeseen and inevitable difficulties that any new enterprise must encounter. It is only IEG No. 1 that is four years old; the others are younger by over a year or more.

In addition to the misrepresentation, other points made by the editorial are worthy of comment. Concern was expressed about three main problems posed by the IEG phenomenon: priority, publication of unrefereed material, and cost.

Priority. It is my personal belief that the question of priority is given undue attention by scientists. If one is to retain this preoccupation, all informal communication between scientists must be restricted, to the detriment of progress. Perhaps the most valuable interaction between investigators working on similar problems arises from discussions in the corridors at major meetings or during visits to laboratories. If these discussions are to be fruitful, the participants must feel free to reveal unpublished data or untested hypotheses. One must assume that new material will be handled in a responsible manner. The same principle should be applicable to IEG communications. The risk taken is outweighed by the gain; for the ultimate aim is the advancement of knowledge rather than the enhancement of personal reputation. In any event, this problem has not proved to be of consequence with IEG so far.

Unrefereed publications. Inevitably, some of the IEG communications will be below the standard required by the best journals. However, it is not an unreasonable assumption that IEG members can make their own judgments about work presented to them. It should be noted that the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology has an annual meeting with an unrefereed programme, and that this programme is eminently successful despite a certain number of sub-standard presentations.

Cost. If IEG is to become a permanent institution, it obviously must attain self-sufficiency, at least in part. A possible means whereby this can be accomplished is a subscription fee for members. If this is applied, the response of the membership will be the final arbiter of the value of IEG.

IEG is a new method of communication. Perhaps the most constructive approach would be a discussion of how best to use it.

Yours, etc.,

THEODORE H. SPAET

Chairman,
IEG, No. 2 (Haemostasis).