

European Physical Society

EPS Secretariat, Rue Marc Seguin 34
F-68060 Mulhouse
Telephone: +33-3-8932 9440
Telefax: +33-3-8932 9449
EPS counts among its members some 4000 Individual Ordinary Members and 36 National Member Societies throughout Europe whose members participate in EPS activities.

Managing Editor

C.C.J. Schneider, EPS Mulhouse

Subscriptions

ISSN print edition 0531-7479

ISSN electronic edition 1432-1092

Volume 28: 6 issues will appear in 1997.
Recommended annual subscription prices –
Institutions: DM 198.–; Individuals DM 98.–.
Special rate for new individual subscribers:
DM 78.– for one year. All prices plus carriage.
EPS Individual Ordinary Members receive
Europhysics News free of charge. Members of
EPS National Member Societies, except the
German Physical Society and the Institute of
Physics, UK, receive Europhysics News
through their society. Subscriptions can either
be placed via an agent or sent directly to:
Springer-Verlag, Postfach 31 13 40
D-10643 Berlin, Germany
Telephone: +49-30-827 87 358
Telefax: +49-30-827 87 448
E-mail: subscriptions@springer.de
Cancellation must be received by September
30 to take effect the following year.

Electronic edition

In 1997 subscribers to the print version of
most of our journals will have free access to
the electronic version. For more immediate
information, please visit us on
<http://link.springer.de>, or contact us per
e-mail access@link.springer.de
or by Telefax +49-6221-487 288

Production

Springer-Verlag
3050 – Journal Production Department
L. Grenzdörfer, Heidelberger Platz 3
D-14197 Berlin, Germany
Telephone: +49-30-827 87 750
Telefax: +49-30-827 87 440
E-mail: grenzdoerfer@springer.de

Advertisements

Springer Verlag
E. Lückermann, S. Kindt, Springer-Verlag,
Postfach 31 13 40, D-14197 Berlin, Germany
Telephone: +49-30-827 87 741
Telefax: +49-30-827 87 300
Advertising is charged according to space and
position, pro rata based on DM 3800.– for a
full page, black and white. Rates on request.
Discounts for EPS Associate Members.
Deadline for orders: on request (normally four
weeks before publication).

Printer

Universitätsdruckerei H. Stürtz AG, Würzburg

Infinite Possibilities

In his splendid account of the Nobel Prize Ceremony frolics in Sweden (in a recent issue of *Physics Today*), David Mermin commented on the lecture of the economics prizewinner. Just like physics, he said, except that physics works

The economists of my own country were until recently given to publishing regular jeremiads in the Sunday papers, urging us all to repent: fiscal doom was approaching fast, the debt collectors were on the doorstep. But instead of spiralling into a black hole we are growing rapidly, radiating prosperity and profits in all directions. Nobody seems to know why.

The more intelligent analysts point to a change in the way business is done, to the emergence of the "weightless economy". This physical analogy should appeal to us. It refers to the high value now placed on the production of information, know-how, image.... These are ethereal but tradeable commodities quite different from the metal-bashing of previous industrial growth.

The weightless economy is mobile and international. Survival and success within it requires flexibility and adaptability. These requirements extend well beyond the world of commerce. Public institutions and societies such as EPS must also face the challenge of a changing world, or be judged to be inadequate.

Specifically, we must improve communication with our members and other societies. Apex air travel to occasional committee meetings is becoming an absurdly inefficient means of creating dialogue and debate.

Even in the 19th. century a physicist (Fitzgerald) could see that telegraphy would create a network of "nerves of civilisation", and our community has been at the forefront of its development ever since, most recently in the form of the WWW. Today a small organisation, a ganglion within the network, can respond instantly to the shifting currents of opportunity. Managing this without being swamped by an information overload presents a problem to many of us in our individual lives. But we cannot put the clock back. We no longer live in *terra firma*, but in a virtual global village immersed in an ether of infinite possibilities.

Since geographical location loses much of its significance in such a virtual world, it creates new scope for devolving responsibility, "outsourcing" in the current business jargon. In future our activities can be actively pursued in every corner of Europe, without losing coherence.

While continuing to stand for certain traditional values and immutable professional standards, we will need some of the quick wits of modern business in order to prosper in our global village.

The President of EPS, Denis Weaire