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Charles Day



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At this year's March meeting of the American Physical Society in Boston, PHYSICS TODAY conducted a series of focus groups. The goal: to find out from readers what they like and don't like about the magazine and when and how they read it.

Most of the volunteers were graduate students and post-docs. Surprisingly perhaps, those early-career scientists overwhelmingly favor the print version of PHYSICS TODAY. They read the magazine at home, on commuter trains, in bars. "It's the only print magazine I read," one participant told us.

I'm glad that the print issue continues to be appreciated. Although print newspapers have declined and even died as classified ads moved online to Craigslist and its ilk, magazines continue to thrive. Ads are intrusive and annoying in YouTube videos, online newspapers, and network TV shows. But in a magazine, ads can be flipped over or gazed at. Another advantage that magazines have over webpages is their superior ap-

pearance. A magazine's fixed physical format gives art directors the freedom to fill pages with gracefully designed spreads. When designing online content, art directors have to contend with different devices and browsers. The one-size-fits-all result is less attractive.

All that being said, it frustrates me that more of PHYSICS TODAY's print readers don't visit the magazine's website. If they did, they'd discover compelling content that is not available in print. It's online because it's breaking news, because it doesn't fit in one of the print magazine's editorial departments, or because it features video, audio, or other media than prose and pictures. The 21 000 words of online content we posted this past July are equivalent to five feature articles in length!

What might you have missed? In May PHYSICS TODAY associate editor Christine Middleton analyzed some troubling aspects of how the media portrayed the contributions of a female physicist to the first direct image of the ring of photons around a supermassive black hole's event horizon. In June we published a captivating account of the resolution of a 123-year-old mystery: How identical forms of a crystalline solid can melt into distinct liquids. In July we published a Q&A with a particle physicist who is applying the machine learning and data visualization skills she acquired at CERN in a job at a startup in Dublin that remotely monitors the health of dairy cows.

If you're an experimenter, you have another reason to visit our website. In July PHYSICS TODAY launched its revamped, easier-to-use Buyers' Guide, a browsable, searchable catalog of lab equipment and software. Look for it under the Resources tab on the website's navigation bar.

One reason you might not be visiting our website, besides being happy with the print issue, is that it's not a habit. The selection of websites that I routinely visit is a modest one that comprises the BBC, the *Washington Post*, the *Guardian*, *Science*, and *Nature*. Even though I've subscribed to the *Economist* since graduate school, I rarely visit its website. But don't worry! You needn't try to remember to visit physicstoday.org. If you sign up for our The Week in Physics alert, you'll receive a weekly email that contains links to fresh online content. Please do. **PT**



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