

Communications

A Further Note on the Current Literature of Research

E. L. Kennaway

(From *The Chester Beatty Research Institute, The Royal Cancer Hospital (Free), London, England*)

(Received for publication June 26, 1941)

In a note on the current literature of cancer research in a recent number of this journal (*CANCER RESEARCH*, 1:164, 1941), the writer pointed out that in 1936 the papers relating to induced lung tumors in the mouse were distributed over 14 journals; the number of such journals must now, in 1941, be still greater. The question was raised whether some concentration of the literature of such a subject into a smaller number of journals could be brought about.

Just after the publication of this note, a letter appeared in *Nature* (Miriam Rothschild, Publication of New Species, *Nature*, 147:676, 1941) which states in a very forcible and concise manner the extent of this defect in the organization of scientific literature as it affects the zoological systematist. The data are shown in a very instructive table which, in an abbreviated form, is reproduced below.

them only one paper which concerned him in the course of a whole year's issue. The enormous disparity between the numbers of journals dealing with, and devoted wholly to, any one group (376, and 7, respectively in the case of *Mollusca*) shows the scope that there is for at any rate some degree of segregation of subjects in scientific literature.

A part of this evil must be due to the institutional journals which publish papers concerned with a very wide range of subjects and hence increase the dispersion of the literature of any one subject. Some of these journals have historical traditions and would not welcome alteration. Any complete solution of these difficulties must be international, and would encounter linguistic and political difficulties; however any such action is out of the question at present. There is

In year 1935	Number of publications other than books	Number of journals used	Number of authors	Journals publishing one paper only devoted to the one group of animals in question	Journals entirely devoted to one group in question	Number of new species described in the year	Number of journals in which these new species are described
Protozoa *	940	263	605	150	3	549	83
Mollusca	1117	376	698	184	7	1437	139
Helminths (including medical literature) ..	1400	451	1191	287	3	776	112
	(392 medical)	(166 medical)					
Siphonaptera (Insecta)	19	17	15	15	0	15	5
Aves	1662	388	1043	203	39	230 †	39

* These groups are not comparable as entities, and include fossil species.

† Subspecies as well as species.

"The table above shows an analysis of the literature of a 12-months' period chosen at random, and relating to five groups of animals, also chosen at random."

The table shows that no less than 139 journals are required for the description of 1437 new species of *Mollusca* and 112 journals for the record of 776 new helminths. And further, a student of *Mollusca* who had time, and opportunity, to examine all the 376 journals dealing with this group would find in 184 of

ample scope for reform within the bounds of a single country, or of a group of countries using the same language.

The present position is best stated in Rothschild's words: "... however diverse the legitimate and non-legitimate reasons for the scattering may be, the fundamental underlying cause is the total lack of any real system associated with the publication of scientific literature."