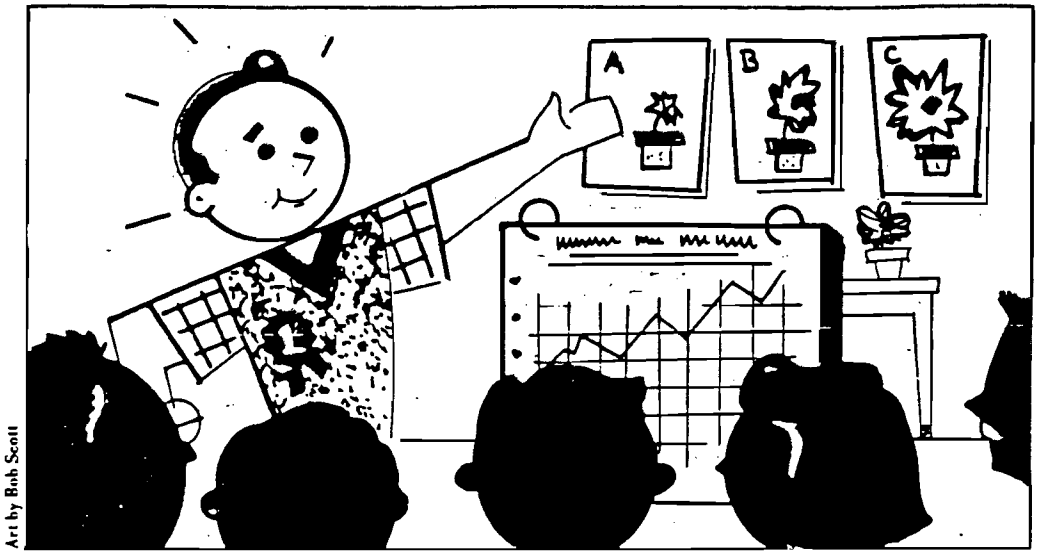
Creating a Winning Display



Art by Bob Scott

by Carl Proujan

In order for the results of any scientific effort to be useful, they must be communicated to other people. Normally, scientists do this by writing papers and publishing them in scientific journals. While this won't be possible for you to do for your science fair project, you'll still be faced with the challenge of communicating what you have done to fellow students, teachers, and science fair judges.

There are lots of ways you can display your work. And it is a very good idea to plan your display very early in the development of your project. Why?

Let's say your project involves *phototropism*. This is the bending of a plant stem toward the light. What better way to illustrate your work than by showing a series of photographs. But, if you don't take photographs during your experiment, you won't have pictures to beef up your display.

What if your project involves the study of different bird calls and your interpretation of their meanings? Clearly, such a project calls for a tape recorder, a sound motion picture camera, or a TV camera. You could set up your display so that the sounds of the birds are heard. And you might even add narration to the tape. This can be done if the bird calls have been recorded on only one band of a stereo tape. You can record your voice on the other band. When played back on a stereo system, your voice and the bird calls will be heard at the same time. You can prepare similar presentations using sound film or video tape. But, again, you've got to plan ahead.

ORGANIZATION

Your display can be very simple as well as effective. Drawings, posters, charts, and models are relatively easy to make. And they help communicate your ideas if they are well organized.

Speaking of organization, somewhere in your display you should show the sequence of events that are the bases of your project. These can be shown in a numbered chart. Your results should be shown in charts or graphs too. Don't hesitate to use color in your charts and graphs. But don't use color just as a decoration. Use it to present different sets of data so they can be seen and easily understood.

For example, if you have a single graph that shows the growth rates of four different kinds of plants over a period of time, use a different color for each plant. Provide a "key" at the bottom of the graph that tells the viewer which color goes with which plant.

PLAN AHEAD FIRST!

If your project involves an invention or a working model that requires electricity, make sure that power is available to run the invention or model. Your best bet is to use dry cell batteries since you won't have to rely on an outside source for electricity. CAUTION: DO NOT RUN YOUR EXPERIMENT AS PART OF YOUR DISPLAY IF THERE IS ANY DANGER TO YOURSELF OR TO VIEWERS. DO NOT USE ANIMALS IN YOUR DISPLAY UNLESS YOU CAN PROPERLY CARE FOR THEM THROUGHOUT THE SCIENCE FAIR. ALWAYS CHECK WITH YOUR TEACHER BEFORE SETTING UP YOUR DISPLAY!

Be sure you understand the rules of your science fair. You might have a perfectly fine project. But, if it doesn't meet the requirements of the judges, or obey the rules of the fair, all your hard work may be wasted. On the other hand, if your work has been imaginative, meets the science fair requirements, and is displayed in a clear, neat, and attractive way you might just have a winner! SW

Questions
answer on back

1- What is a display?

2- Why should you plan your display early?

3- Why should you include graphs and charts?

4- Why should your project be organized?

5- Why should you know and understand the rules of the science fair?

6- Explain how you are going to present your project.

Sci fair

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pg 22

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