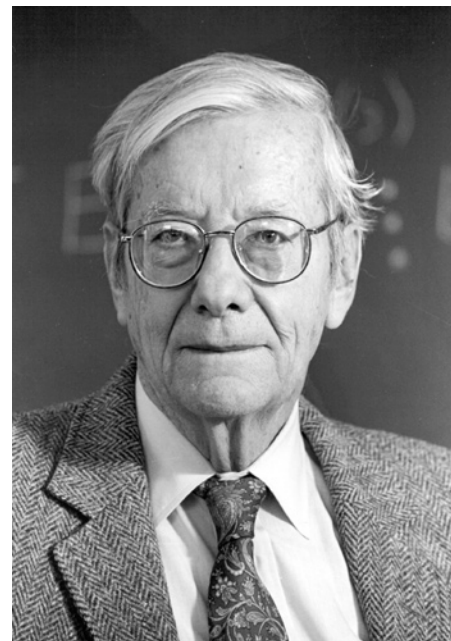


SMOKING – NO HYDROGEN!
sign once posted on the office door
of Anatole Abragam



Nicolaas Bloembergen: an interview to the *EPR newsletter*

EPR newsletter: Dear Professor Bloembergen, on behalf of the readers of the EPR newsletter we congratulate you on your 90th birthday. We are most appreciative that you agreed to answer the questions of this interview. Why did you start towards your career in science?

I found physics the most intellectually challenging subject in my high school curriculum. I attended a Latin school called gymnasium in my native country of the Netherlands. At the age of ninety I find it even more challenging. During the past 50 years my main interest has shifted from EPR to Nonlinear Optics.

What do you think about the young generation of the EPR researches and what is your message to them?

I have found the present young generation of students in the sciences equally motivated as 70 years ago.

What would you have done if given a different opportunity?

I cannot answer the last question. The opportunities in physics were always dominant.

Ninety-five years and still going strong

Dear Anatole, Congratulations on your 95th birthday! You are one of the great scientists of our time. Not an atomic physicist or a condensed matter physicist or a nuclear physicist ... but a Physicist with a capital P, a rare and vanishing breed of universal scholar. You have helped to define and shape the very foundations of our field and you have been an author for two updated testaments of the bible, thereby serving as a mentor and guiding light for generations of aspiring and accomplished scientists. Your attempts to escape the limelight have been in vain and you continue to attract awe and adulation from all corners of our community. You have been a world leader in the planning and organizational dimensions of French and international science, helping to cultivate the prominence and vitality of our chosen field of magnetic resonance. Beyond your science, scholarship and leadership, you are an individual distinguished by great erudition, multinational culture, graceful wisdom and piercing wit.

You have taught us much and we owe you a debt of eternal gratitude.

Much about your extraordinary scientific contributions and your magisterial observations and comments has been spoken and written in many venues, including this Newsletter volume 14 number 4 (2005) on the occasion of your 90th birthday, and in your own remarkable autobiographical works. Abundantly dispersed within the pages of these written contributions are also anecdotes about you, characterized by a brilliant sense of humor and an uncanny grasp of the subtleties of language. We encourage our colleagues in the magnetic resonance community to revisit the wonderful documented story of your life.

Anatole, you have been a dear friend to many of us for so many decades--we treasure your friendship among our prized possessions. May you and Nina continue to live a vibrant, inspirational life and to enjoy many more years of health, happiness and relaxation.

Erwin Hahn and Alex Pines



Richard R. Ernst¹

The Follies of Citation Indices and Academic Ranking Lists A Brief Commentary to 'Bibliometrics as Weapons of Mass Citation'²



The account by Antoinette Molinié and Geoffrey Bodenhausen on 'Bibliometrics as Weapons of Mass Citation'³ presents a lucid indictment on the current misuse of citation numbers and of science rankings. In the face of ratings and rankings by merely counting citations like nit-picking, the outcry of two concerned researchers necessitates no corollary or further supporting arguments. The present hype of bibliometry made it plainly obvious that judging the quality of science publications and science projects by bibliometric measures alone is inadequate, and reflects the inadequacy of science management regimes staffed by non-scientific administrators or by pseudo-scientists who failed to develop their own personal judgment.

Today, an erroneous conviction prevails that institutions and individuals of 'value' can be measured ultimately in terms of a single number that may form part of a competitive 'ranking list'! Only nobodies and nameless institutions never ever appear in a ranking! Today, an uncountable number of granting and promotional decisions are taken based on such superficial and misleading lists. – The absurdity of such a craze may best be enlightened by a comparison with non-scientific fields: Who would ever select top musical performers just by the number of references in newspapers, irrespective whether the reviews are favourable or not? Who would ever qualify renowned painters based on the number of 'quotes' in the form of plagiary borrowings by less creative artists or by plain copyists? Who knows, soon also Nobel Laureates in literature will be selected based on citation indices! – Fortunately, very fortunately, most of the great human minds of the past had not yet to worry about the mediocrity of rating agencies. Otherwise, human history would have taken a different course; and many of the greatest human achievements would never have been made.

Our pride of being the most creative species ever living on earth would then be plainly ridiculous.

The only question that remains to be answered, after having read the pertinent account by Molinié and Bodenhausen, is how can we stop this degrading bureaucratic regime of ranking and citation agencies and their mindless fan community? – In the following, I would like to propose a number of remedies to save the dignity and creativity of scientists and researchers.

i) Let us formulate a creed of scientists and researchers of all kind: Never ever use, quote, or even consult science citation indices! Let us appeal to the pride and honesty of researchers to derive their judgments exclusively by careful studies of the literature and other scientific evidence. It is better refuse to comply with requests than to base your judgment on numeric bibliometric indicators! Let us incorporate this creed into our teaching, discrediting 'number games' as incompatible with our goals of objectivity, credibility, fairness, and social responsibility, as researchers.

ii) Let us establish, on the Internet, a generally accessible Webpage to list agencies, journals, and individuals who regularly use and misuse bibliometric measures in their judgements. Let us encourage researchers to add their critical commentaries to this database to identify notorious violators of the above creed. We may call this database 'Bibliometric Discredibility Pillory' or BDP. It could be that an enthusiastic bibliometrics fan might even be inclined to apply the standard bibliometric evaluation tools to this database to

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³ A. Molinié and G. Bodenhausen, *Chimia*, 2010, 64, 78–89.

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establish a 'Bibliometric Discredibility Index' or BDI to identify the worst offenders of academic credibility.

iii) Let us discredit specifically rating agencies and their managers that have established and regularly publish science citation indices and university ranking lists; agencies that enrich themselves on the account of science quality, and cause more harm than good. Let us urge funding agencies to never ever support projects that intend to further extend bibliometrics based on merely counting citations.

It is only by this kind of active resistance to the follies of bibliometrics that our scientific self-respect and credibility can be saved. We should liberate our minds again to enable true creativity in view of long-term social benefits. We certainly do not want to convert

our precious universities into bureaucratic training centres for mindless citation hunters! Our institutions shall remain for ever unbiased resorts of limitless human dignity and foresight.

We are deeply convinced that human ingenuity and creativity are beyond all conceivable quantitative measures. We know that human beings are singular in their qualities (and their deficiencies). In order to apply justice to them, we have to respect them as individuals, each with his own particular gifts. Let us try to understand researchers and their creative output, but not attempt to compare or rank them! Whenever ill-conceived bibliometric measures are being applied, it means that non-quantifiable extraordinary achievements are cropped such that they become commensu-

rable with the mediocrity of routine research. In this way, science loses all its outstanding features that could justify also outstanding supporting efforts. Bibliometrics may indeed turn out to become the ultimate tombstone of veritable science.

And as an ultimate plea, the personal wish of the author remains to send all bibliometrics and its diligent servants to the darkest omnivorous black hole that is known in the entire universe, in order to liberate academia forever from this pestilence. – And there is indeed an alternative: Very simply, start reading papers instead of merely rating them by counting citations!

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Notices of Meetings

Asia-Pacific EPR/ESR Symposium 2010

Jeju, Korea,
October 10–14, 2010

www.apes2010.org

APES 2010 will cover the frontiers of all aspects of EPR/ESR ranging from theoretical and experimental advances in CW EPR/ESR, pulsed EPR, high frequency and high field EPR, ENDOR, time resolved EPR, FMR, EPRI, CIDEP and ODMR to applications in medicine, biology, chemistry, materials science and nanotechnology.

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EPRBioDose2010

Mandelieu La Napoule, France,
October 10–14, 2010

www.iss.infn.it/epribiodose

EPRBioDose is actually two conferences in one: the International Symposia on EPR Dosimetry and Dating (EPR) and the International Conference on Biological Dosimetry (BioDose).

Topics: Biological and biophysical indicators of exposure / Retrospective dosimetry / Dosimetry in accidental situations and emergency response / Dosimetry in radiation therapy / Dosimetry in radiation processing / Instrumentation improvements / Fundamental mechanisms of radiation effects / New dosimetric materials / Dating

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The 49th Annual Meeting of the Society of Electron Spin Science and Technology (SEST2010)

Nagoya, Japan,
November 11–13, 2010

bio.phys.nagoya-u.ac.jp/sest2010

SEST2010 will be held at Symposium Hall in Toyoda Auditorium of Nagoya University during November 11–13. This is the 49th Annual Meeting of the Society of Electron Spin Science and Technology. The annual meeting will cover the wide range of EPR/ESR applications in physics, chemistry, biology and medicine. Participants from all over the world are welcome. The deadline for the registration is September 3, 2010. For further information, please see the website or contact:

Shin-ichi Kuroda (Chairperson), Hisaaki Tanaka (Secretary), Organizing Committee, e-mail: sest2010@bio.phys.nagoya-u.ac.jp

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