

## Letter From The Editor

Philipp Steger, May 2003

***“Knowledge will grow as lang as we share it”***  
*(a Turkish proverb)*

About two years ago, I came across an article regarding MIT's decision to post its course materials on the Web and thus make them available also to the non-paying public. I still remember the positive excitement at reading this news. After all, the free sharing of information & knowledge is what my generation in Austria grew up with: we enjoyed the tremendous privilege and benefit of universal and free access to higher education. Amongst other things, this afforded us as young graduates, unburdened by student loans, to take the jobs that we really felt like doing, even if that entailed living on what only remotely resembled a salary.

I mention that report from two years ago, because I now see that there could not have been a better suited way, although then unplanned and unintentionally, to kick off what then evolved into “Voices”, the OST's effort at making available some of the results of its government-funded work. In April 2001 I wrote a few lines summing up the MIT-news and then sent it out to a list of about 30 people who were outside the home agencies that Science Diplomats traditionally report to but were an essential part of my country's Science & Technology Policy community. This action, based on the assumption that these people would find this news very interesting, triggered a whole series of such brief and informal reports. The impromptu service obviously met a hitherto unfulfilled need: the word spread and the list of subscribers has by now grown to over a thousand. We were surprised to find that about a fifth of the subscribers aren't even Austrians or people located in Austria, but Europeans from a variety of EU member states and institutions.

We never had any intention of competing with those whose daily and weekly business it is to gather and distribute news about new developments within Science – Science Journalists know their trade and don't need imitators amongst the uninitiated. In the same vein, we felt we didn't want to reproduce the works of scholars that concern themselves with Science & Technology Policy.

Instead, we knew that the unique value of “Voices” would lie in the perspective from which we report on a variety of S&T policy related issues, and from the fact that the reports make complex political situations understandable to S&T policy wonks living and working outside the U.S.

Sure, anyone can go on the internet these days and find all sorts of data, articles, essays and the likes on, let's say, NASA, but it's a lot tougher if you are trying to find something that gives you a comprehensive overview of what the current situation at and with NASA is.

This is what “Voices” has set out to accomplish: take the S&T related news, the background information, the tremendous breadth and depth of expertise inherent in the Network of Austrian Scientists & Scholars in the U.S. and Canada, a network which the OST has developed over the last two years, and turn it into informative, comprehensive and readable articles on some of the pressing U.S. Science & Technology Policy issues.

“Voices” will be published as a series of reports covering a broad range of S&T topics in irregular, but fairly short intervals of a few weeks. The reports will, for the most part, be prepared by OST staff, but an essential part of them will be outside contributions, from

Austrian Scientists in the U.S. and, hopefully, also colleagues from the Science & Technology offices from other European embassies in Washington D.C.

Thus, "Voices" will eventually be truly a chorus of diverse voices, all sharing their insights and knowledge on U.S. Science & Technology Policy related issues.

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