

“Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it.”¹

– SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709-1784), BRITISH AUTHOR, LEXICOGRAPHER



ON THE COVER

Marco Gaceci,
Dr. rer. nat.²

OWNER, PRINCIPAL,
IQG S.L.³ (THE HAGUE, NL)

published works include:
“Environmental Chemistry of
the Actinide Elements”⁴

found at Scirus.com

EDITOR AND COPY
Nanci Tjengeman

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTION
Marc Krellenstein,⁵
Chief Technology Officer,
Elsevier

David Marques,⁶
Director e-Learning,
Elsevier

CONCEPT AND DESIGN
Arniika (image builders)⁷
www.arniika.nl

PROJECT COORDINATORS
Jacqueline Oldenburg
Susan Viggs

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Community.

The cornerstone of research.

At its essence, research is nothing more and nothing less than building on the accomplishments of a community. When we gather information about what's new or what's novel in our field of study, we are building on the foundations of other people's work. Scientists do not work in a vacuum; we do not reinvent research. First and foremost, we are part of a community.

And in that community it is important to share information. That's how our ideas begin and how they flourish.

Scientists have always relied on communities. We each have a circle of colleagues close to us – in our school, in our field and in our institute – with whom we share information. We meet; we talk to each other;

we exchange emails. We share ideas and knowledge through these personal contacts – at our home institute and through conferences. We supplement this personal contact with databases, books and other printed materials.

Over the past decade or so there's been an astonishing explosion in scientific knowledge – and with it an expansion of our communities. At the center is the World Wide Web.

Today a targeted search on the Web can connect a scientist in Toronto, struggling with a new lab method, with a like-minded scientist in Singapore who might have different insights into the same problem. The Toronto scientist can ask, “What were the effects of variation? What worked? What didn't work?” and get an answer. A colleague's lab is no longer down the hall or in the next building – collaborations are global.