

# Complete Archive of the Royal Society Journals

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For the first time, the Royal Society is making the complete archive of its journals freely available online. For a two month period, the public will be able to access scientific papers going back to 1665, when Henry Oldenburg published *Philosophical Transactions*, the first-ever peer-reviewed journal in the English language.

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The archive contains classic scientific papers from the likes of Isaac Newton, Edmond Halley, Michael Faraday, Albert Einstein, and Francis Crick. At the same time, the journals provide a direct glimpse into the fascinating history of science; particularly *Philosophical Transactions*, which in earliest years published papers on a wide variety of subjects and blurred the distinction between science and everyday reportage.

In the first 1665 issue of *Philosophical Transactions*, Robert Boyle describes the experiments made into the nature of 'cold' in a paper titled 'The Experimental History of Cold' (*Phil Trans* 1 8). Later in the same issue, Boyle also relates an story, this time from a butcher in Hampshire who had come across a deformed calf, titled 'An account of a very odd monstrous calf'.

Another report published in 1681 describes the experiences of sailors off the north-east coast of North America. They discovered that after their ship was struck by and heavily damaged by lightning their compasses underwent a complete change in polarity (*Phil Trans* 14 520). 'The North point was turned clear South...As for the other [compass] the North point stood West...The seamen were at first puzzled,' wrote Edward Lad, master of the *Abermarle*.

In the midst of such miscellany, a letter from a Professor of the Mathematics in the University of Cambridge, made its way into publication in 1671. Representing his earliest contribution to the history of knowledge, Isaac Newton describes the invention of a reflecting telescope in a letter containing his 'New Theory about Light and Colors' (*Phil Trans* 6 3075).

Those interested in the history of science are hoping that more historical publications are made available. 'The question for

historians at present is firstly, how much of these and other resources will be made freely available over a longer period of time, and secondly, how can we continue to build up complementary resources by digitizing manuscripts and information about instruments," said Iliffe.

Until now, the Royal Society's online collection only extended back to 1997. The new archive makes every journal published by the Royal Society accessible via the Internet.

Source: PhysicsWeb

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