

Editorial

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X-ray may be the only scientific term that has become part of the common vocabulary in all languages of the world. The discoverer of X-rays, Roentgen, a modest man who refused to patent his finding so that the world could benefit from it, would have been very happy to know his discovery has had such a widespread impact. Besides its well-known application in the detection of broken bones, we see in this issue of *Resonance* that X-rays have been used to advance science in a variety of surely unanticipated ways, from studying galaxies and stars to uncovering the structures of molecules.

A book that I recently read and which I think would appeal to readers of *Resonance* is Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything*. A stupendous effort that retraces the path of the current state of knowledge in almost every field, and peppered with accounts of unsung heroes, daring adventures, bad science and good science, the book makes delightful reading. Bryson, a non-scientist, ensures that the material is understandable to lay people. Commenting on the constant recycling of atoms he reminds that "... a significant number of our atoms – up to a billion in each of us – probably once belonged to Shakespeare, a billion more each came from Buddha and Genghis Khan..." No wonder, we are all so confused! And there is good news for scientists. Any field one thinks of, there seem to be fundamental questions begging to be answered. For cosmology he sums up thus, "... we live in a universe whose age we can't compute, surrounded by stars whose distances we don't altogether know, filled with matter we can't identify, operating in conformance with physical laws whose properties we don't fully understand." Other fields are not much better placed. I hope we provide the right education and a fecund environment for our bright youngsters to become passionate about science and to be in the forefront of the exciting discoveries that await us.



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