

BIOMOLECULA.RU: POPULARIZATION OF LIFE SCIENCE IN RUSSIA

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Biology, particularly the parts of it which study living systems at the molecular level, is the one of the most rapidly developing fundamental sciences today — what creates the necessary prerequisites for practical application of scientific knowledge in such socially important areas as biotechnology, molecular medicine, *etc.* Given this, the problem of science popularization for the society is becoming more and more prominent. There is no doubt that taxpayers, government officials and businessmen have to understand how do scientists spend their money and what are the possible benefits the investments can bring. Needless to say that scientific and technological potential of the State defines its position on the international scene. The high authority of science as a social institution which is accepted by the society lays at the basis of such potential.

Western civilization long ago had become aware of the necessity of making science explained to a layman. Nowadays it is the part of a long lasting cultural tradition. Many high profile scientific journals, *e.g.* *Nature* and *Science*, had developed news websites which report the latest advances of science at the level accessible to the general public. There are also plenty of science educational websites in English, which aggregate information from different sources like press-releases of universities and research institutes covering the scientific work of their employees.

In this regard Russia is lagging behind the West, especially after deterioration of educational traditions existed in the Soviet Union. Quite often a scientist learns about the achievements of his or her colleagues from a foreign journal because there are no press-releases issued by research institutes. It is even worse for people who are not involved in research — they have no idea about the activities inside their native research institutes.

Development of interactive network of widely-available educational resources in the Internet will allow popularization of biology, in particular among young people. Several popular science websites in Russian covering “the latest scientific advances” had appeared recently. Unfortunately, the majority of them contain only unprofessional translations from foreign resources of a similar kind, prepared by journalists lacking in scientific competence. “Biomolecula.ru” (<http://biomolecula.ru>) is a young science educational website, which specifically covers the advances of contemporary physico-chemical biology (biophysics, biochemistry, molecular biology, bioinformatics, *etc.*). The main distinctive feature of the project is that it is run by people which are actively involved in scientific research — young postdocs and PhD students working in Russia and abroad. The most valuable content of “Biomolecula” is not short “news reports” on latest research but rather extensive and detailed reviews of various aspects of contemporary life science.

Online journal “Biomolecula” is a voluntary enterprise. The project exists and develops only because of the enthusiasm of its organizers and authors who have decided to spend their time on sharing their professional knowledge with the general reader. “Biomolecula” gladly welcomes new readers and authors — any scientist (a postdoctoral fellow, a PhD student, and even an undergraduate) who is eager to try his or her talent of science popularization could give it a try and join the community of “Biomolecula”.