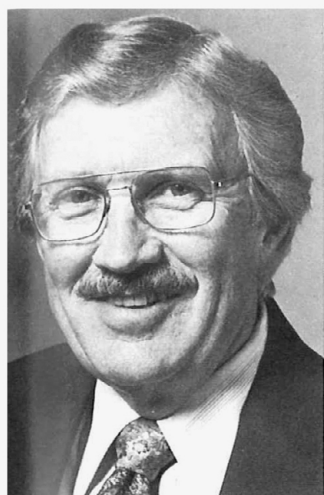


What Is Applied Research?

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As one who has long been identified with a minority group of “phytopathologists” in expressing the view that we should extract our profession from obscurity and obfuscation by identifying ourselves in such a way that the non-professional will know what we do, I am delighted to see the birth of *PLANT DISEASE* and note that the mother of this infant is our own Society.

As with any infant, however, the early formative years will have an important impact on the outcome of the child as he or she progresses through adolescence into adulthood.

How we nurture *PLANT DISEASE* through these early years will largely determine its success and survival or its failure and demise.

Since this new publication has been created to provide a means for publishing research of an applied nature and for recording observations of significance in increasing our understanding of plant pathology, there is reason to pause briefly and examine the meaning of the term “applied.” Many hours of intense academic discussions have been consumed in debating the difference between applied and basic research. They have led to some interesting definitions, none of which in my opinion has been definitive or helpful. It has been said that basic research is really applied research involving a longer time frame than other kinds of research before it achieves practical application. A flippant definition is: “Basic research is what I do; applied research is what others do.” Regardless of how one chooses to define these two kinds of research, if indeed it is important to make such a distinction, it is important to define the goal for articles that will appear in our new journal.

There can be no quarrel about strict adherence to quality. Applied research is not a synonym for sloppy research nor is it to be equated with superficial testing and nonrigorous investigation. All research is applied by someone for some purpose. The questions for us to examine are: “What audience are we attempting to reach with *PLANT DISEASE*?” and “Is the information revealed in its articles of value to them?”

These questions are easier to ask than to answer because I believe that all persons engaged in all aspects of research related to plant pathology should find the contents of *PLANT DISEASE* of interest and value to them. However, I think *PLANT DISEASE* should regard as its primary audience the practitioners of plant pathology and those who are concerned with the holistic aspects of plant health. In addition, we need to consider as a potential audience people who are not necessarily plant pathologists but who have a concern for or knowledge of the effects of plant diseases in their activities. It is less important to gauge the appropriateness of the information for inclusion in *PLANT DISEASE* by the length of time between discovery and practical application than by whether that information leads to an increased understanding of the disease itself—its inception, development, or control.

The key to the thrust of articles appropriate for inclusion in this new journal lies in its name, *PLANT DISEASE*. Our profession was spawned by scientists who had a curiosity about the detrimental effects happening to important crop plants. No less important today than over 200 years ago is the need to relate our knowledge to the control or elimination of important diseases of food, fiber, and ornamental plants. Our profession is an applied science, both important and critical to the well-being of people. As with all applied sciences, it is undergirded by good fundamental science, science which reveals truths that have broad application or affect a wide variety of events. It follows, then, that the answer to the question “What is applied research?” is found by deciding how narrowly or how broadly the expected results of the research can be applied.

In *PLANT DISEASE* we have an opportunity to provide a needed complement to our journal *Phytopathology* by focusing attention on the diseases of plants and what we can do about controlling their adverse effects. In assessing the appropriateness of the subject matter for this new journal, it will be important to decide whom we expect to use and gain the greatest benefit from the information presented. I recommend that we devote the major emphasis of this journal to information that will be of value for the practitioners of plant pathology to use in combating plant diseases. If we do that we will have given birth to a well-bred infant destined to grow into a strong and productive adult. We will have a vehicle to help us apply our science for practical purposes and display our profession’s usefulness to society in general. This should be a source of great pride and satisfaction to all who work in the field of plant pathology.