



Heffter Research Institute

Research
at the Frontiers
of the Mind

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SEPTEMBER 1996 marked the beginning of the fourth year of formal existence for the Heffter Research Institute. Our small organization continues to grow in several ways. Although we are still searching for the donors that will really allow us to fulfill our mission, we have taken many small steps. First and foremost, we continue to move forward, with no loss of momentum or enthusiasm for the future. As MAPS members already know, we have co-funded the psychedelic bibliography, now accessible on the MAPS and Heffter home pages. This was a joint venture with MAPS and the Albert Hofmann Foundation. We have also provided funding for a scientific conference on ayahuasca in Brazil.

Our home page on the Web, <http://www.heffter.org>, has generated a fairly constant and satisfactory level of interest, and a number of other sites have now linked to us. The site is undergoing several changes that will make it even more attractive and we encourage you to browse there

if you have the opportunity. You will find the text of our printed materials there, interesting molecular graphics, descriptions of research projects, as well as biographical information on the founders and advisors.

Manuscripts are now in the editing process for our first Heffter Review of Psychedelic Research, due to be published in Spring 1997. We have recently participated in a joint fundraising venture with MAPS, and again owe a great debt of gratitude to Rick Doblin for extending the good hand of cooperation and friendship to us.

Although the current climate in the United States remains largely unfavorable to the mission of legitimate research with psychedelic agents, being in some sense "underdogs" has created a spirit of cooperation and camaraderie among the Heffter, MAPS, and Hofmann Foundation folks that continues to inspire us. As you know, underdogs quite often surprise people, and win important contests. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the Heffter founders and scientific advisors represent primarily mainstream science, there are clearly many psychological and societal barriers yet to be overcome before both policy makers and the general public are ready to accept the premise that psychedelic agents are worthy of substantial research effort. We are all grateful for the small but growing numbers of dedicated supporters who believe in the ultimate importance of this work.

There are at least two events, however, that promise to help change occur. The first one is the recognition that the newest generation of antischizophrenic agents potentially interact with the same class of brain receptors as do LSD and related psychedelics. While this does not mean that psychedelics actually model mental illness, it does emphasize the importance of understanding the role of this receptor in the brain, and increases the likelihood that more extensive research resources may be put to bear on its study by government and corporate agencies. The second potential happening that would lead to a dramatic move forward would occur if efficacy can be shown in Dr. Charles Grob's proposed Phase II clinical study with MDMA in the treatment of pain and distress in cancer patients. We believe the latter result would be a signal event leading to much greater interest in clinical research with psychedelic agents by psychiatric medicine.

All in all, these are very exciting times. Stick with us in the coming years. We have the opportunity to make a difference and it is worth the struggle! Or, in the immortal words of Yogi Berra, "when you come to the fork in the road, take it!"•

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