

fund-raising agility of fusion's scientists?

ideas inspired an intellectual, isolated in his smoke-filled, stant revolutionary. Dismayed that he was an "irrationalist" Kuhn reassured colleagues that want to overturn the scientific, gh initially poignant, his per-aging over his legacy became of his cruelest detractors com-er Sellers's character Chance e dim-witted protagonist of o gains fame because others remarks for profundities.

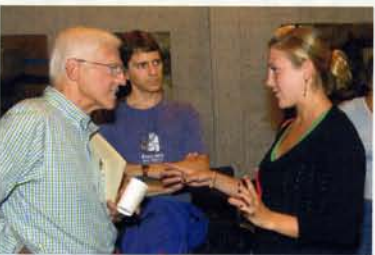
etailed historical studies con-e men who were themselves onaries. Two were Max Planck ein, who helped initiate the revolution in 1900–1910 but its weirder theoretical impli- scientist was Copernicus. In s reassured those discomfited *ibus orbium coelestium* that o lose sleep over. By moving center of the universe to an illion miles from the Sun, he ng humanity's importance in mology, because the distance e Sun was still "nothing in ompared to [the distance] to s we now know, of course, he sy prophet and at worst dis- ffect of Copernicus's revol- r more devastating, not only culturally. Displacement of rtral position made nonsense theories of motion. This in pire the more sweeping intel- n of Galileo, which would ific authority of the Church oral stature, thanks to the ecutio of the astronomer). nity and its secular, satellite- s.

hn's *Structure* might come to same way: as the little spark s. His sardonic manifesto trig- rial revolution far bigger than ted or wanted. It was the first olarly war still raging today e that marvelous but much- ject, science. **L**

son is writing a biography of University Press. Davidson scences of Kuhn from any- mer students who knew him r after his years at Berkeley please contact Davidson at om.

Science and the café society

THE AXIS CAFÉ IS A GATHERING SPOT just off Potrero Hill in San Francisco. The neighborhood is postindustrial, but the streets are lined with Audis and Toyota Priuses. Inside the café, modern art decorated with Saran wrap and chicken wire adorns cement walls. Customers line up for pomegranate juice, Thai peanut chicken sandwiches, or herbed duck breast on focaccia.



Information exchange: Professor Fred Wilt discusses sea urchin genes with a science café audience at the Axis Café.

spilled his own beer during the last slide. "As much as there is a stereotype of scientists as being nerds, there are lots of scientists who actually can talk to people—and want to."

Science cafés (or "cafés scientifiques" as they are called in some circles) can now be found from Washington, D.C., to Dayton to Denver. Some, like the one in Palo Alto, are sponsored by private companies. In the East Bay, the science café is run out of the Berkeley Natural History Museum. Still others are just cobbled together by science enthusiasts like graphic designer Juliana Gallin, who started the San Francisco group called "Ask a Scientist."

"You come here for a couple hours and you leave thinking 'I can't believe I just heard that,'" she says. "I like to be dazzled. And so I figure if I do, other people will also." —Erik Vance

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CRISTINE TACCONO

Tonight the place is packed and, as someone tests the speakers, one could easily assume that a poetry jam is getting started. But this is an audience of another sort. Instead of turtle-necks and designer ripped jeans, they wear "Electronic Frontier Foundation" hats, and T-shirts that read "Don't worry, I'm a geologist." The meeting is a so-called science café, where layfolks sit down with well-known scientists and quiz them about everything from dark matter to stem cells.

Science cafés started in France in the '90s but have gained traction in recent years throughout Europe and the United States. Enthusiasts say the point of these gatherings is a free, laid-back lecture that balances learning with a sense of awe.

The guest tonight, glaciologist Kurt Cuffey of Berkeley's geography department, is talking about Antarctica. "I've never done a forum quite like this," says Cuffey, who produced a laugh when he admitted to once eating 50,000-year-old ice. "With students in classes it's a very different vibe, because they have to be respectful in a way that these people don't."

Audience members munching biscotti regularly interrupt Cuffey with questions or stories. People are encouraged to argue—one asks about the 2004 movie *The Day after Tomorrow*, in which climate change triggers a new ice age. Cuffey patiently explains the film's faults, and one can tell Dennis Quaid is not popular with glaciologists.

Later the same week in a Berkeley pizza pub, Jeff Grossman, executive director of the Center of Integrated Nanomechanical Systems (COINS), talks to the East Bay science café about nanotechnology. Like an actor performing at a dinner theater, he constantly breaks from descriptions of microscopic quantum dots or carbon "buckyballs" as waiters bring pizza and beer to the tables.

"The information exchange between science and the public is at an all-time low," says Grossman, who