THERE Issue of the SLAC Beam Line is unusual in several ways. First, at 64 pages it is the longest issue that we have yet produced. Second, rather than a collage of different physics topics it concentrates on a single theme: the centennial celebration of Wilhelm Roentgen’s discovery of X rays in 1895. Third...well, let’s back up a bit before we write down what comes third.

This issue begins with an article by Philip Morrison, who tells us, from a physics perspective, “How the 20th century started ahead of time” with the discoveries of X rays, radioactivity, and the electron. This issue ends with an article by Virginia Trimble, who tells us how astrophysics may go “On beyond X” into the next century to view the Universe in the light of gamma rays, neutrinos, and gravitational radiation.

Thus Morrison and Trimble are, in several senses, the bookends for this issue, and what a pair of bookends they are! It is probably not true that Philip Morrison and Virginia Trimble
have read everything and know everything. It is probably only half true. But even the polymathic minds are not the full story. To know it is a necessary but not sufficient condition of being able to say it or write it. If there is an exemplar of all that is best in English prose style, it is probably someone like Bertrand Russell, and reading Morrison and Trimble gives rise to much of the same pleasure that one takes in the clarity, grace, and wit of the prose.

But enough already. Part three of the special character of this issue is to welcome Phil Morrison as a first-time contributor to our journal, and also to emphasize our continuing pleasure in the superb articles that Virginia Trimble produces for each issue of the Beam Line in “The Universe at Large.”

Rene Donaldson  Bill Kirk