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Microscopy AND Microanalysis

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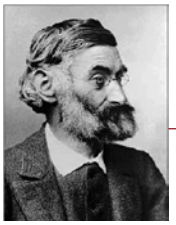

DearAbbe

Dear Abbe,

We have been plagued with a series of microscope thefts and recently heard of a colleague with the same problem. In all your years of working with state-of-the-art, expensive equipment, I am sure you have had problems with theft. What can we do to stop this, beyond locking away our microscopes in a bank vault?

Disgruntled in Des Moines

Dear Disgruntled,

It's indeed sad to think you can't leave a microscope alone on a benchtop these days. We all know scoundrels better suited for a career as a proctologist's model (I'll refrain from mentioning a name). However, modern technology does provide some solutions. One is a perfect opportunity to cut the smart-phone umbilical cord! Open up the cell phone and take out the guts, including the GPS chip. Find a place inside the microscope where these pieces can be hidden and the battery can be charged from the lamp transformer. It is a good idea to place the GPS chip in a location such that the signal to the cell towers won't be blocked. The thief can then be tracked. But there is an even more satisfying solution! Engineers are working on "self-healing" concrete, in which small capsules of acrylic cements are embedded, so when the concrete cracks, the capsule also cracks, and the glue comes out to seal the crack. I can hear you applauding already. Substitute "thin membranes" for "capsules" and "crazy glue" for "acrylic cement," and violà! The act of grabbing the microscope breaks the membrane, releasing the glue, and the thief is glued to the microscope. The thief is caught microscope-handed! If both of these anti-theft solutions are installed, the GPS then leads authorities to the thief. Unless he's seen *127 Hours*.

If you are having security concerns, don't fret about them. Call an expert with years of experience. If the phone has been disconnected, however, you may wish to contact Herr Abbe's faithful assistant at jpshield@uga.edu

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