

BIOCHEMISTRY

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EDITORIAL

Biochemistry has experienced remarkable and, I believe, positive changes in the past year. On the outside, the new cover projects a fresh and forward-looking face with a larger variety of graphics. Inside, we have improved the appearance and readability by including table of contents graphics and full titles in the references. With the requirement for electronic submission of manuscripts instituted in January 2004, more than 98% of all papers are submitted and reviewed electronically. These changes have had a definite and positive impact on the ease and time it takes to move a submission from author to editor to reviewer and back. I am also pleased to report that, through November 2004, submissions to *Biochemistry* have increased almost 6% over the same period in 2003.

There have been changes in the associate editors as well. Jill Trehwella stepped down in February 2004 due to other professional commitments. Her service was greatly appreciated. Jim Riordan retired at the end of 2004 after 10 years of exemplary service to the journal. Authors appreciated his very efficient and fair handling of manuscripts during that period. This year, *Biochemistry* is very fortunate that John Gerlt at the University of Illinois agreed to join as an associate editor in October 2004.

The field of publishing in the area of biochemistry and chemical biology is very competitive. We are trying to position *Biochemistry* at the forefront of this arena by expanding coverage in emerging areas such as informatics, functional genomics, proteomics, computational chemistry, and new technologies for investigating the mechanistic and structural bases for the function of molecules in biological processes. Your input into how *Biochemistry* can enhance its impact at the interface of chemistry and biology is always welcome.

One issue I highlighted last year was the American Chemical Society's stance on open access to scientific information. In the meantime, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) proposed an open access policy, which involves deposition in a government archive of all scientific papers reporting NIH-funded research. I realize that this proposal has a certain appeal. However, in my view, this is a clunker of an idea that solves only part of a much larger problem at

an unknown cost and risk to the NIH budget. The proposal needs to be vetted very carefully. More importantly, this proposal or others like it would not be necessary if the ACS and other publishing organizations came up with alternative business models to achieve more open public access to scientific publications while preserving the revenue stream required for peer review, production, and sustainability. Once again, I urge you to make your opinion known to ACS governance on this issue. This problem will only be solved with a vigorous and open debate of the complex issues it entails.

Another issue that *Biochemistry* in particular, and ACS journals in general, must tackle is potential conflicts of interest in scientific publishing. Many scientific journals, particularly those that publish articles where scientific and commercial interests intersect, require all authors to disclose conflicts of interest. At this point, ACS journals do not have such a requirement. However, it is important for ACS publications to implement a conflict of interest policy that will provide the level of transparency necessary for referees and readers to judge the objectivity of published conclusions in any paper. It is my hope and belief that this will be done soon.

Finally, I want to convey our appreciation to all the individuals who devote part of their valuable time in reviewing manuscripts for *Biochemistry*. The journal and the ACS are constantly looking for ways to make this process easier and seamless for reviewers. We now seek referees for individual papers by e-mail before assigning a manuscript for review. If you receive a request for review, the editors and authors would appreciate a quick response, either yes or no. Obviously, we would prefer that you say yes and then provide a timely review, particularly if you publish in *Biochemistry*. The two most important ingredients for an excellent journal are great articles and rigorous peer review. Thanks to all of you who have provided both.

Richard N. Armstrong

Editor-in-chief

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