

Biochemistry

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EDITORIAL

Each year the Editors and Editorial Advisory Board meet to discuss the policies and procedures of the Journal. Our goal is to provide an exciting publication that presents significant new advances of general interest for understanding biological processes in terms of molecular structure and/or function. Inevitably this requires subjective judgments as to what is "significant", what is "of general interest", and what is "molecular". These are moving targets: what was appropriate in the past may not be appropriate now.

In order to be fair to all authors, we have a well-defined review process. In the initial review, a minimum of two Editors, or an Editor and a member of the Editorial Advisory Board, must find the work to be inappropriate for a manuscript to be rejected without further review. In the next step, two reviews are usually obtained. If the reviewers disagree as to the disposition of the manuscript, the recommendation of an Editorial Advisory Board member is obtained. The Editor's decision is based on the results of this review process. Of course this system is not infallible, but we have not been able to devise a better one. Without question, the slow step in the review process is extracting reviews. The strategy of the editorial offices is to contact late reviewers by fax and phone, but this is not always successful. We appreciate the time pressures all busy scientists have, but peer review is essential for the progress of science. We now receive reviews via fax and the Internet and use express mail frequently. In the interest of speeding up the process further, we also will utilize fax for returning reviews unless authors request otherwise.

Several topics discussed at the annual meeting were of general interest. Concern was expressed with regard to the length of manuscripts. Although no serious thought was given to limiting the length of regular articles, authors are urged to be concise in their writing. Furthermore, the policy of the Journal is to publish only representative data. For example, routine gels, linear plots, routine spectra, etc. will not be published. However, authors should submit all material necessary for the reviewers to evaluate the work. In addition, data of more specialized interest can be submitted as Supporting Information to be made available on the Internet.

Considerable time was spent discussing what is appropriate and significant in diverse fields of biochemistry. We now receive many manuscripts concerned with structural determinations by NMR and X-ray. There was general agreement that determination of a structure alone is not necessarily a significant advance. It must provide new information about function or general principles of protein/nucleic acid structure. For example, we often receive manuscripts in which the structures of small peptides are determined by NMR, usually in organic solvents. Such studies must clearly indicate the biochemical relevance of the structures. In a quite different field, steady-state kinetic studies by themselves do not usually represent a "significant advance". They should be coupled with other information, e.g., mutagenesis. We receive several hundred manuscripts per year concerned with protein folding. These studies must represent a significant advance in understanding the mechanism of the folding process, the function of the protein, or structural interactions. These represent a few of the research areas discussed.

The WEB Edition of the Journal also was extensively discussed. Clearly scientific publishing is moving more and more to electronic media. The on-line version of the Journal is being upgraded continually. We are providing an increasing number of

hyperlinks, for example, to MEDLINE abstracts and the PDB database. We are also providing information for access to a structural presentation program (RASMOL). We are now discussing linking references directly to other on-line journals. The quality of presentation has greatly improved so that reprints from the Internet version are of excellent quality. The printing of colored illustrations is still a problem, but this is a function of both the receiving printer and the on-line information. As a special feature of on-line publication, articles will be posted on the Internet as soon as the corrected proof is available. The date of placement on the WEB will appear in the printed and on-line versions as the official date of publication. This could cut several weeks from the publication process.

Finally, I would like to thank our many authors and reviewers for their contributions. This is *your* Journal, so please let me know if you have any suggestions for improvements and innovations.

Gordon G. Hammes
Editor

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