

# BIOCHEMISTRY

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## EDITORIAL

The years 2006 and 2007 mark a big transition for *Biochemistry*. As all recent authors and reviewers for *Biochemistry* have noticed, the American Chemical Society is in the midst of the deployment of Paragon Plus, a completely web-based system for the submission, editorial processing, and review of manuscripts. This is essentially a customized version of Manuscript Central that is used by many other major journals. *Biochemistry* was the first “large” ACS journal to be converted to Paragon Plus. The transition, at least for *Biochemistry*, has been remarkably smooth from an editorial standpoint, given the complexity of the endeavor. There have been some snags, and we are working through them with the ACS.

I hope that authors will embrace the new system. The submission of a manuscript is a bit more complicated than the previous process for electronic submission to ACS journals. However, in my experience, it is far less complicated than that of many other journals that publish similar science. One advantage for authors and editors is that all reviewers and editors now have access to the manuscripts they are reviewing and handling via the web. This makes it quite easy for an editor to make a decision on a manuscript even while traveling. In principle, this should speed the processing of papers.

The editors are considering the introduction of a new type of manuscript for *Biochemistry*, perhaps called a “communication” or “rapid report” which would be reserved for timely topics of unusual interest. These papers would be strictly limited to either three or four printed pages. Moreover, the journal will guarantee a decision on the paper within three weeks of receipt. That is the plan. I would be most happy to entertain suggestions from authors, readers, and reviewers on this subject. If you believe that this is a good idea or a bad one or that it should be modified, please let us know at [journalbiochem@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:journalbiochem@vanderbilt.edu)

Publishing in *Biochemistry*, as well as all ACS journals, is a bargain for authors. There are no page charges, color is free, and authors receive 50 free electronic reprints that can be sent anywhere in the first year. Twelve months after publication, authors may distribute unlimited electronic reprints. In addition, ACS Publications has introduced *ACS AuthorChoice*, which allows authors, for a fixed payment,

to immediately post electronic copies of their articles on their own personal websites and institutional repositories for noncommercial scholarly purposes. This model is very much like that used by the PLoS journals or *The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* to provide free open access to the public, but the ACS can do this at a substantially reduced price. Interested authors can find out more by going to <http://pubs.acs.org/4authors/authorchoice/>.

We are fortunate to have added a new Associate Editor, Prof. Karen Allen from Boston University, in 2006. Karen is a protein crystallographer with interests in enzyme mechanisms and functional genomics. In addition to the normal duties of an Associate Editor, Karen has been charged with invigorating our Current Topics article series, which are short reviews by experts in the field on subjects of recent or continuing interest. These reviews are usually by the invitation of the editors. However, if you have a good idea for a Current Topics article, and would like to recommend it, please do so by contacting Karen Allen or me.

As always, I want to express our appreciation to the many individuals who devote part of their valuable time in reviewing manuscripts for *Biochemistry*. Peer review is the backbone of any good journal. We now contact potential reviewers for papers by e-mail before assigning a manuscript for review. If you receive a request to review a paper, the editors and authors would appreciate a quick response: either yes or no. Of course, the editors always prefer that you say yes and then provide a timely review, especially if you publish in *Biochemistry*. I realize that we all are always busy, so if you cannot provide a quick review, please suggest a couple of alternate referees for our consideration.

As with most journals, a fraction of the papers that are received at *Biochemistry* are declined without being sent out for a formal review. I thought it a good idea to explain the policy of the journal in this regard. If an editor receives a paper that she or he believes is inappropriate for the journal, the editor can decline the paper without a formal review. However, the editor is requested to obtain a second opinion either from another editor or from a member of the Editorial Advisory Board. Papers that are declined without review

usually fall into three categories: those with subject matter that is not covered by the journal, those describing science that is not compelling, and those that represent subquality science. Fortunately, the latter is very rare. I believe this is a fair policy that benefits both the authors and the reviewers. The authors get a quick decision on a paper that is unlikely to fare well in the review process, and the reviewers can concentrate on papers of high merit.

The two most important ingredients for an excellent journal are great articles and rigorous peer review. I want to convey my personal thanks to all of you who have contributed to the journal in these regards.

Richard N. Armstrong  
*Editor-in-Chief*

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