

Editorial

Biodegradation has been launched in response to the emergence of its discipline as one of great scientific interest and of great practical importance. Basic research has led to the isolation of interesting new microorganisms which have the ability to degrade many xenobiotic compounds by pathways which are sometimes very surprising and ingenious. Much effort is currently being devoted to study of the genetic control of these pathways and their manipulation. There is clearly much to do in the way of basic research in biodegradation: conversely, the need for applications to solve and prevent environmental problems is immediate. There are encouraging signs that funding will be made available on both fronts. Studies on biodegradation have become an important branch of general and applied microbiology which now merits its own journal. *Biodegradation* aims to be the premier forum. In order to achieve this status it will need to reach high standards of scientific quality and timely publication.

Biodegradation is a sister journal of *Antonie van Leeuwenhoek*, which has a long tradition of publishing papers in the field of general microbiology. Both journals have a declared policy of accepting for publication only manuscripts which have been reviewed in detail by two independent referees. This is a process which takes time, and together with an initial publication schedule of four issues per year, is clearly a limit on the speed at which papers can be published. *Biodegradation* will aim to establish its reputation on the basis of the quality of the papers it publishes. This is not to say that rapid publication is viewed as being unimportant: it is rather a recognition of the initial constraints under which the journal operates. The frequency of publication will be increased as soon as sufficient manuscripts of the required quality are being attracted in order to ensure that publication of papers is as prompt as possible.

The Editorial Board comprises many individuals of international repute who deserve thanks for their help in soliciting and reviewing quality manuscripts and for giving their time in the months leading up to the launch of *Biodegradation*. The Editors have been greatly encouraged by the reception given to the announcement of *Biodegradation*. The comment of readers on the direction and focus of the journal will be very welcome, especially during the early days of this promising new venture.