

EDITORIAL

'Vassene il tempo e l'uom non se n'avvede'* [1] – all of a sudden FEBS Letters is 25 years old. The story of the journal's conception and birth is presented in this issue by the first Managing Editor, Prakash Datta himself. At that time I belonged to the onlookers of this birth; then I saw the 'child' grow, take a clearly defined place, and play an important role among the international biochemical journals. I was both pleased and flattered when I had the chance to succeed Prakash Datta some seven years ago. However, had I dreamt that the Managing Editor's job of this journal would be a sinecure, I was to go through a sudden sobering awakening, when at the beginning of my time of office we received up to a dozen manuscripts each *day*! Obviously, my wife and I had no problem in deciding what to do in our 'free' time.

Being the Managing Editor of a journal with high scientific standards is perhaps the most straight-forward way to lose one's friends, but it is undoubtedly an interesting challenge. Combining speed of publication with careful, critical reviewing is not easy, and inevitably I must have taken some wrong decisions during these years. On the other hand, it is gratifying to see that the journal is thriving. We receive more and more manuscripts every year, among which many are excellent. FEBS Letters seems to attract such papers, i.e. because of its high impact factor and its fast publication time. Due to the dedication of our Editors (our 'average Editor' handles 2–3 manuscripts a *week*!) and to the special efforts of our friends at Elsevier, our overall publication time in 1992 was as short as 36 working days, or approximately 51 calendar days (Fig. 1). This includes the scientific editing, reviewing, desk editing, typesetting, proofreading, printing, binding, mailing, etc. We hope that the authors themselves will help us in improving our journal further. In particular, authors considering submitting a paper to us should (i) read carefully the information on our editorial policy which is printed on the inside front cover in each issue; (ii) send a floppy disk along with the hard copies of the manuscript; (iii) submit the paper to the editor closest to *their field* (when in doubt, simply ask any editor).

Ever since its beginning, our journal has been given special attention by the publisher (see the preceeding Editorial by Prakash Datta). In my first years, I had the pleasure of collaborating with Dr. Patrick Jackson and with very dedicated and knowledgeable desk editors (A. Kourdoulos and A. Groom), and later with Dr. Rein van Charldorp and a new team of equally dedicated, knowledgeable and efficient desk editors, headed by A. van

*Fast flows the time, and man sees it not.

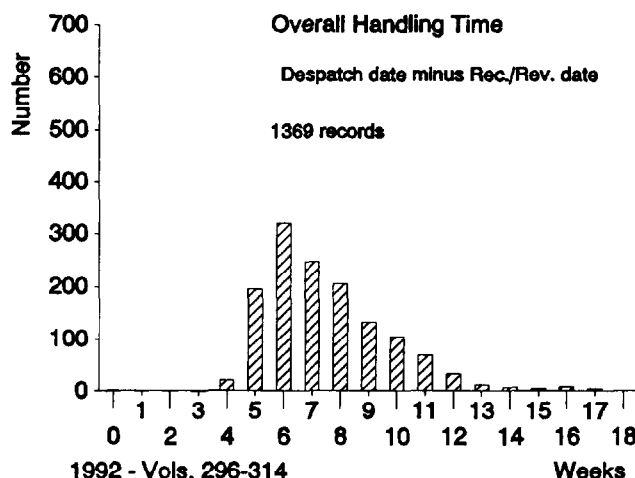


Fig. 1. Overall publication time of all communications published in 1992 (Volumes 296–314): date of despatch from warehouse minus date of receipt of revised manuscript or first editor's date of receipt when no revision was involved. Average publication time: 36.18 working days; 7.24 weeks.

der Werf and A. Prukar. The 'publisher's handling time' (i.e. the time elapsing from when they receive a manuscript from an Editor to the despatch date) is now as short as 26 working days, or approximately 36 calendar days.

1992 has been an important year for our Journal. FEBS Letters now appears weekly, and has a topical figure on the front cover of each issue. The present special issue, which appears in connection with the Stockholm 1993 FEBS Meeting and commemorates the 25th birthday of the journal, contains the 6th Datta Lecture by A. Fersht, and a number of minireviews, mostly from invited contributors; the latter have mainly been the responsibility of M. Saraste, whom I want to thank especially.

The sad financial situation of most libraries throughout the world is not without consequence for the circulation of biochemical journals. Nevertheless we have lost only a few percent of our subscriptions; FEBS Letters thus fares much better than most journals. This is encouraging, because a sizeable portion of the income of the Federation of European Biochemical Societies, a non-profit making organisation, stems from its journals (FEBS Letters and the European Journal of Biochemistry). Thus, by subscribing to our journals, you contribute in an additional way to the future of our fascinating science.

Zurich, May 1993

Giorgio Semenza

REFERENCES

- [1] Dante Alighieri, *Purgat.*, IV, 9.

Table I
Geographical Distribution Vol. 296-314 (1992)

Country	Origin of papers		Journal distribution ^b	
	No. ^a	%	No.	%
Austria	8.33	0.61	12	0.7
Belgium	19.50	1.42	12	0.7
Bulgaria	0.83	0.06	—	—
Czech and Slovak Federal Rep.	11.66	0.85	—	—
Denmark	28.16	2.05	13	0.8
Finland	6.00	0.44	14	0.9
France	92.66	6.75	83	5.0
Germany	175.16	12.77	187	11.3
Greece	1.50	0.11	7	0.4
Hungary	8.83	0.64	9	0.5
Iceland	1.00	0.07	—	—
Ireland	1.50	0.11	—	—
Israel	22.16	1.62	10	0.6
Italy	48.83	3.56	78	4.6
The Netherlands	38.66	2.82	82	5.0
Norway	2.50	0.18	7	0.4
Poland	6.50	0.47	10	0.6
Portugal	0.50	0.04	—	—
Spain	44.99	3.28	26	1.6
Sweden	39.66	2.89	23	1.4
Switzerland	38.33	2.79	30	1.8
Turkey	—	—	6	0.4
UK	138.33	10.08	142	8.6
USSR/CIS	86.83	6.33	—	—
Yugoslavia	2.00	0.15	—	—
Rest			19	1.2
FEBS TOTAL	824.42	60.09	770	46.7
South Africa	3.00	0.22	10	0.6
Rest of Africa			3	0.2
AFRICA TOTAL	3.00	0.22	13	0.8
Hong Kong	1.00	0.07	—	—
India	16.00	1.17	23	1.4
Japan	217.50	15.85	201	12.2
P. Rep. China	4.00	0.29	7	0.4
Singapore	1.00	0.07	—	—
South Korea	—	—	20	1.2
Taiwan	1.00	0.07	7	0.4
Rest of Asia			10	0.6
ASIA TOTAL	240.50	17.52	268	16.2
Argentina	4.50	0.33	5	0.3
Brazil	3.00	0.22	9	0.5
Chile	7.50	0.55	5	0.3
Mexico	1.00	0.07	6	0.4
Canada	45.83	3.34	49	2.9
USA	225.15	16.41	486	29.5
Rest of America			6	0.4
AMERICA TOTAL	286.98	20.92	566	34.3
Australia	14.33	1.04	26	1.6
New Zealand	2.66	0.19	7	0.4
AUSTRALASIA TOTAL	16.99	1.23	33	2.0
WORLD TOTAL	1372.00	100.00	1650	100.0
Free subscriptions			47	

^a Decimal figures represent shared origin of papers

^b No figures given if less than 5 subscriptions, but included in area totals.