

EDITORIAL

Looking ahead at 1995

Dear Reader,

The scientific community seems to appreciate our journal, i.e. the efforts of our authors, editors, reviewers, publishers, etc., to produce a vehicle for the fast dissemination of high-quality scientific reports. All parameters – whatever value they may have when taken individually – agree: the high impact factor, the long quotation half-time of papers published in the FEBS Letters, the ever-increasing number of manuscripts we receive (2946 in 1994), and, of course, their obviously good or very good quality. To nobody's surprise, all production costs keep increasing, while on the other hand the funds for research (including those for libraries) shrink or, at best, remain constant. This squeeze may indeed be dramatic. We do realise that covering the increased costs simply by increasing the subscription fee would be a disservice to our science – indeed it would run against the very philosophy of our journal and of FEBS. We have decided, therefore, that the extra pages published in 1994 are to be given free to the subscribers, and, even more importantly, that the price of our journal for 1995 will NOT increase. Furthermore, if an increase is absolutely necessary in future years, it will be kept as moderate as at all possible. Also, to stimulate authors to submit their figures in full colour the extra cost for colour reproduction has been reduced to Dfl. 750.00 for a single printed full colour page and an additional Dfl. 500.00 for any subsequent page (excluding sales tax). This will enhance both the scientific and aesthetic qualities of FEBS Letters.

You may have noticed that since the last months of 1994 we have been using smaller letters to reduce the empty spaces and reducing the size of unnecessarily large figures, etc. Also, from 1995 onwards we will publish the general indices only once a year, but each issue will carry a list of the authors who have published in it. (The Notes to Authors will appear as now, at the end of every tenth volume, the next one after this volume being vol. 370.) Minor as each of these changes may seem, their cumulative effect will hopefully restrict the number of pages printed, and thus the production costs.

The two characteristics of our own 'product' which are not, nor ever will be, tinkered with, are the scientific quality and the extremely short publication time: on average in 1994 this was approx. 7.5 weeks or 38 working days. (Note that the FEBS Letters are not produced camera-ready.) Indeed, efforts are constantly being made to reduce the publication time further.

You, as a potential author, can help us greatly towards improving the quality of the journal, and at the same time speeding up the handling of your manuscript. Read and strictly follow our Notes to Authors; consider carefully the statement on our editorial policy (cover page 2 in each issue)*. Most importantly of all, you can help our journal by sending us papers which, in your opinion, conform to our editorial policy. Do NOT send us a weak or incomplete paper "for a try", or a badly written or preliminary version of your text. Remember that rejection of a paper is an unpleasant affair for us also and is a pure loss of time – both yours and ours.

A fast-publication journal is confronted, perhaps more often than other periodicals, with ethical problems. We sometimes receive complaints of co-authors disagreeing with the text submitted (often too late to stop publication); or of co-workers stating that they have been wrongly excluded as co-authors (there is little we can do); or of competing groups whose contributions were not adequately acknowledged (please, write a *Comment* to rectify); or that information candidly provided in a spirit of co-operation has been misused for a scoop.

We do share the concerns which others have expressed (e.g. [1]): ethical behaviour is indeed very fragile and competition may lead some to think that the end justifies the means. The "means" mentioned above are certainly not those of which we approve, and, even less so, wish to get involved with. Another, important way of helping us to improve the journal consists of providing us with a (preferably friendly) feedback.

The Managing Editor:

Giorgio Semenza,
Zurich.

The Chairman of the FEBS Publications Committee:

Karl Decker,
Freiburg i/B.

REFERENCES

- [1] Musacchio, J.M. (1994) FASEB J. 8, 679–683.

*Even if some details may seem to you petty, irrelevant or simply minor, do pay attention to them: if you provide the appropriate editor (if you can not choose, ask) with (i) a diskette (important!), (ii) three hard copies, (iii) high-quality figures of the right size, (iv) a sticker with your address, (v) the proper keywords, etc., many errors will be avoided and our operation will run faster and smoother.