

Editorial

A good-bye and best wishes for the next millennium from the Managing Editor

Dear readers, dear authors,

Having served as the Managing Editor of this journal for 14 years, I will soon pass this task over to Prof. Matti Saraste, EMBL, Heidelberg.

During these 14 years FEBS Letters has continued to proceed in the successful pathway initiated and developed in the 18 years since its conception, under the guidance of its founder and first Managing Editor, Prof. S.P. Datta. It is remarkable, in these years of hard competition (also among journals), that a publication can continue to be an increasing success for so long, as judged by various mutually agreeing criteria. The most recent impact factor of FEBS Letters, that of 1998, shows yet a further increase: it is now 3.581. More and more manuscripts are being submitted to our journal - in 1999 there were approx. 3500 submissions. This has forced all our Editors to increase their rejection rate, which is now approx. 51%; we are sorry that sound pieces of work could not be published, but unfortunately the size of the journal, and its cost, cannot increase indefinitely. Many of us, in the process, have lost quite a few friends!

FEBS Letters' average publication time has been further reduced: it is now approx. 4.5 weeks, the production time at Elsevier being 3.5 weeks. The full text of accepted papers now appears in electronic form some 5 days after they have reached Elsevier.

In financial terms the journal has also been a success. It contributes very sizeably to the support of the fellowships, advanced courses etc. of FEBS, which is a charity, i.e. a non-profit making organisation. In this respect our journal has also contributed and is contributing to the education and support of young biochemists.

Clearly, the success of a journal is not - cannot be - the merit of one person alone. This is true for FEBS Letters also. The unflagging dedication and fairness of all Editors throughout the years, the friendly and efficient co-operation of our partners at Elsevier (Drs P. Jackson, R. van Charldorp, M. Tanke, B. van der Hoek and A. van der Werf - to name only those with whom we have had day-to-day contact), and the support of the FEBS officers, have been essential components in the success of the journal during 'my' years. But thanks are also due to all those who, in one capacity or another, are or have been associated with FEBS Letters, particularly to Dr J. Weber, whose dedication and knowledge have been essential in the operation of the Zurich editorial office. And, last but not least, the authors themselves must be thanked: it is the quality of their papers that has made the quality of the journal.

The present, decentralised mode of operation of FEBS Letters sets a heavy burden on each Editor's shoulders; it has reached (and probably surpassed) the limit reasonably compatible with other activities. My successor plans - as indicated on our web site already - to make changes in the mode of operation of the journal: I am sure that, under the guidance of Matti Saraste, FEBS Letters will thrive on and will continue to cope successfully with the mounting competition, including that of the solely electronic journals.

I am sure that the 1000 new years beginning Jan. 1st will witness further success of our, i.e. your, journal.

Zurich, Dec. 1999

Giorgio Semenza