

EDITORIAL

The European Journal of Neuroscience From 1997-2008.

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I was the third Editor-in-Chief of EJM to be appointed, succeeding Michel Cuénod, whom I knew well as a friend and colleague both when he was Secretary General of the Human Science Frontier Program and by serving as EJM Receiving Editor (behavioural and cognitive neuroscience) during his Editorship. As Michel mentioned in his earlier editorial, EJM was then being published by Oxford University Press which, despite his repeated well-justified requests, refused to allow the journal to expand by increasing the number of published pages until the initial investment in establishing EJM was viewed as recouped. At that point in 1997, The European Neuroscience Association (ENA, which transitioned to FENS in 1998) had received no revenue from the journal, contrary to the clear expectations that it would strengthen the financial underpinnings of FENS' scientific and educational mission, as was the case for other societies and their journals (e.g. IBRO and SfN). During the process of transferring the editorship to me, FENS decided to invite competitive bids from other publishers rather than simply renew the contract with OUP under such suboptimal conditions. The result of this competition was that Blackwell, the renowned academic society journal publisher, became the new publisher of EJM.

Many reading this editorial will have little or no idea about manuscript submission and editing at this time – the late 1990s. When the editorial office was handed over to me, the contact details of authors and referees were handed over to me by Michel's wonderful editorial assistant, Barbara Vanotti, in the form of a box of index cards – some bearing a black mark indicating those referees having repeatedly failed to return manuscript reviews on time. All manuscripts were submitted in hard copy triplicate by post; referees were contacted by fax; hard copy manuscripts were mailed or couriered to referees who faxed back their reviews. All communications with authors were by letter or fax; there were also many phone calls! We all knew this had to change and that an electronic manuscript submission and review system had to be adopted with some urgency. On taking on the editorship, I also learned that there was a 12 month backlog of accepted manuscripts awaiting publication because the number of published pages had not been allowed to grow to match the increasing number of submissions of high quality manuscripts. Undoubtedly some authors gave

up on the journal at this point – at least temporarily – and the number of manuscript submissions stagnated. Blackwell rapidly arranged for several bumper issues to be published, rapidly clearing the backlog so that we could begin with a relatively clean slate. However, by then the Impact Factor of the journal had dropped to a little above 4 and it proved frustratingly difficult to move it back up to where the quality of papers suggested it should be.

FENS and I were extremely fortunate to have Blackwell as publishers with the strong support of the Director, Robert Campbell, and especially to have Aileen Boyd-Squires responsible specifically for EJM within Blackwell. Aileen was extraordinarily creative and energetic. Even better, the journal office where the journal was managed was based at Odéon in Paris, so my editorial meetings with Aileen and her staff to discuss developments and strategy were not a burden to attend! Aileen initiated and oversaw many positive changes and within two years, HTML editing, an online edition of EJM in Blackwell Science *Synergy* and electronic Table of Content emails were in place and we were well on the way to establishing an electronic editorial office. She also worked closely with the FENS, which was now receiving substantial annual revenue from EJM, in particular with Treasurer Helmut Kettenman to provide free online access to all members of FENS through national and other European member societies, as well as to members of SfN, and to establish the FENS-EJM awards.

The transition to an electronic editorial office was almost complete and scheduled to go live to authors and editors on Monday, September 17th 2001, but the tragic events of 9/11 changed that decisively, as the US banks called in business loans, including that from PaperPath, the company that had been working with Aileen, me, Sue Fromant and Angela Cole (my editorial assistants in the Cambridge editorial office) to make the transition from paper to electronic submission and review. PaperPath ceased trading and all manuscripts in process were therefore lost in one day. Sue and Angela worked heroically to recover our data and re-establish our research manuscript tracking system, while Aileen seized the initiative and rapidly negotiated with a very responsive and helpful ScholarOne, who adapted for EJM at very short notice, the configuration of Manuscript Central that had just been established for the Journal of Neuroscience. So within 3 months of the collapse of PaperPath, electronic submission and review of manuscripts, and our entire editorial process were online. I cannot over-emphasise that Sue and Angela, along with Jane Houchin in the Production Office at Blackwell, were tremendously committed to EJM and worked tirelessly to make the

author experience as hassle-free as possible. During this period manuscript submissions more than doubled from about 700/year in 1997 to over 1600 by 2003, with some 2,500 decisions being made annually.

Another major and positive change to the editorial structure followed the agreement by the FENS Publication Committee to my 2002 proposal to appoint Chris Henderson, who had been a Receiving Editor, as joint Editor-in-Chief. Chris and I worked together closely and harmoniously for the rest of our joint term, supported by our new point person at Blackwell, Liz Ferguson. We enjoyed the very positive engagement of a remarkable board of Receiving Editors that included Tom Südhof, Yves Alain-Barde, Pietro de Camilli, Betsy Murray, Rae Silver, Silvia Arber, Alex Thomson, Tamas Freund, Martin Sarter, Jean-Marc Fritschy, Tomoyuki Takahashi, Wolfram Schultz, John Garthwaite, Sten Grillner, Ron McKay, Christophe Mulle, Joël Bockaert, Nikos Logothetis, Phil Haydon, Ole Isaacson and more, who were located across Europe, North America, Canada and Japan. In our editorial decision-making process we developed a form of feedback to authors that involved, if not a consensus review such as adopted by eLife and eNeuro today, a consensus editorial letter written by the Receiving Editor together with one or other of the Editors-in-Chief that made clear what in the reviewers reports authors should respond to carefully and what they could refute. We tried very hard to engage authors in a constructive process and to ensure as best we could that manuscripts received fair treatment and could be improved by constructive feedback.

Chris and I decided to stand down in 2007, handing EJM on to our successors, Jean-Marc Fritschy and Martin Sarter, who we were delighted to have been appointed by FENS as the new Editors-in-Chief in 2008. There was great satisfaction that a financially stable journal had been established that was and is providing a significant annual income giving financial stability to FENS. I wish the new Editors-in-Chief, Paul Bolam and John Foxe every success in taking the journal forward in this challenging scientific publishing environment.

Author's Biography

Barry Everitt served as Editor-in-Chief of EJM from 1997 to 2002 and joint Editor-in-Chief with Chris Henderson from 2002-2008. During that time he was Professor of Behavioural Neuroscience at Cambridge University, served as President of the European Brain and Behaviour Society (and was the first signatory on the FENS Charter when it was established in Berlin in 1998), President of the European Behavioural Pharmacology Society and will be President of FENS from July 2016 until the 20th anniversary FENS Forum in Berlin in 2018.