

The best is yet to come

This is an exciting time for *Chemistry & Biology*. As we begin our second full year of publication, we can already say that the journal is beginning to have the effects we had hoped for. The 16 issues published so far have contained dozens of fascinating papers on a wide range of topics relevant to both chemists and biologists; every paper has been published expeditiously, and presented in a format that is accessible to all our readers. It is equally gratifying to see the way in which the Crosstalk and Minireview formats have encouraged the exchange of information and ideas between groups that, in the past, have had little to say to each other. To us, this seems like a beginning that could hardly have been bettered.

Nevertheless, we plan to do even better in the future. We have already achieved one improvement in the addition of a fourth Associate Editor, Peter Leadlay, to an already outstanding editorial team. Peter was trained as an organic chemist, but has worked for many years in a very biological environment, the Biochemistry Department of the University of Cambridge. His work focuses on the dissection and manipulation of the multi-enzyme systems that synthesize complex compounds such as the polyketide antibiotics, and his contributions to this area have been profound. We are glad to have the benefit of his expertise, and we are particularly delighted by his enthusiastic support for the journal. Like many of our contributors (and readers), Peter had felt the lack of a journal that would report on all the areas in which progress is being made towards a chemical understanding of biological processes. We look forward to his help in making *Chemistry & Biology* even more of a natural home for papers reporting findings of this kind.

We are particularly glad that Peter has agreed to join our team because he represents a significant increase in our representation in Europe; although the papers we have published from Europe to date have been excellent, submissions from the US are still far in the majority. We plan to increase the international flavor of the journal considerably in the coming year. All submissions should continue to be sent to the San Francisco office of the journal, however.

The second change we plan is an expansion of content. In the 16 issues published so far, it would be fair to say that *Chemistry & Biology* has largely focused on the central ground of the broad area that constitutes its scope, the increasingly significant area in which techniques and ideas drawn from chemistry overlap with the techniques and ideas drawn from biology. We are excited by the increase in interest in the journal, seen both in the increase in the quality of submissions and in the public appreciation of papers that appear in it. There can be few journals that attract editorial comment from

magazines as diverse as *Science*, *Nature*, *The Economist*, *Chemical & Engineering News*, *BusinessWeek* and *New Scientist*, among others, all within the first few months of publication. This is clearly a reflection of the excellence of the papers the journal has published so far, as well as the unique relevance of their subject matter. But some of the areas that we originally included in the scope of the journal have so far been under-represented in our pages. We expect that the range of subjects covered in the journal will expand significantly in the coming year, to include more traditionally chemical papers such as those dealing primarily with synthesis, molecular design, and natural products chemistry, as well as more traditionally biological papers, such as those dealing with an understanding of the ways in which cells signal, move, divide and metabolize. For those who are uncertain of whether a paper is appropriate for the journal, we can offer a preliminary editorial opinion on the basis of an abstract (which should be sent to the San Francisco office).

The issue of scope brings us to perhaps the most exciting development of the last year, namely the increasing sense we have that the community of researchers who work on what might be called 'chemical biology' is beginning to define itself through the pages of this journal. Of course, the concept of chemical biology is still a nascent one. Some indication of the increasing interest in the areas of research that are the focus of *Chemistry & Biology* comes from changes in the institutions that harbor both of us. The Harvard Department of Chemistry voted last year to change its name to the 'Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology', and the 'Skaggs Institute of Chemical Biology' will soon be established within the Scripps Research Institute. The Harvard vote reflects, in large part, the influence of two members of the department, Konrad Bloch and Frank Westheimer, both now Emeritus professors, who have been pursuing an understanding of the chemical basis of biology for at least thirty years. In a way, the only reason that this change is surprising is that it took thirty years to come. The fact that biological problems are increasingly well defined from a chemist's point of view, in part thanks to the dramatic progress made by our colleagues in structural biology, has certainly contributed to the new topicality of chemical approaches to biology.

One thing that will not change in the coming year is the speed and efficiency with which we process submitted manuscripts. Many authors have been astonished by the rapidity with which our editorial staff handle manuscripts, and it is perhaps worth detailing a few statistics here. Considering all primary papers submitted since the journal began, we see that the average time from receipt to a decision is under 16 days. We have not once taken

longer than our self-imposed limit of four weeks to reach a decision on a research paper. Equally astonishing is the length of time taken once the paper is accepted for it to appear in print. Taking the 21st of the month as our issue date, the average time from acceptance to publication is 33 days. Overall, therefore, the average time taken for a paper that does not need significant revision to appear in print is only seven weeks — many journals, even those that pride themselves on rapid publication, cannot achieve this rate even for the rare papers that they consider worthy of accelerated review. This speedy treatment does not mean that we compromise on quality, however. Speaking as authors ourselves, we have been impressed by the thoroughness of the refereeing process, and the care taken in preparing manuscripts for publication.

Publication, these days, does not only mean print publication. Electronic publishing seems certain to be a true revolution in the way we access information, and readers

(and authors) of the journal will be glad to know that *Chemistry & Biology* is taking full advantage of the new opportunities it provides. The full text, complete with figures, of all *Chemistry & Biology* issues published last year is now available to subscribers in searchable format via the BioMedNet site on the World Wide Web. New issues will also be available in electronic format before the printed version reaches most subscribers. More information on BioMedNet can be found elsewhere in this issue or at <http://BioMedNet.com>.

We are grateful for the support of all those who have given the journal such a good start, especially our Associate Editors, the editorial and technical staff in San Francisco and London, our excellent and responsive referees, and of course our authors and subscribers. We now look forward to your continued support, and to your comments and suggestions, as we strive for further improvements.