

Editorial

Changes in *Biochimica et Biophysica Acta* — a new elan

The new, physical appearance of *Biochimica et Biophysica Acta* (BBA) is a reflection of the many changes introduced in BBA during the last two years. Changes to the editorial management of BBA and in the manuscript handling procedures, were aimed at further streamlining the reviewing process to ensure rapid publication. In addition, several new initiatives have been taken.

1. Editorial structure

In the rapidly expanding fields of biochemistry, biophysics, and molecular biology, selection of the best reviewers for any manuscript requires first hand, up-to-date knowledge of the field in question. For this reason each Executive Editor has now assumed responsibility for a particular section of BBA, contrary to the situation before 1995, where all sections were under the general responsibility of the complete Board. In view of the size of the individual sections, two Executive Editors were appointed for each of the larger sections, and one Executive Editor each for the General Subjects section and for the youngest BBA section, Molecular Basis of Disease.

This decision implied an expansion of the Board of Executive Editors, a process which has taken place gradually during the last two years. We are now close to our goal and are very pleased to welcome several outstanding colleagues as new Executive Editors to BBA. These are, Joseph Avruch (Charlestown, MA), Minoru Fukuda (La Jolla, CA), Thomas Kreis (Geneva), Tony Lee (Southampton), Ylva Lindqvist (Stockholm), George Lorimer (Wilmington, DE), Peter Rich (London), Jack Riordan (Scottsdale, AZ), Dennis Vance (Edmonton) and Mårten Wikström (Helsinki).

The present distribution of responsibilities among the various sections is as follows:

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| Bioenergetics (including reviews on Bioenergetics) | Peter Rich and Mårten Wikström |
| Biomembranes and Reviews on Biomembranes | Tony Lee |
| Lipids and Lipid Metabolism | Henk van den Bosch and Dennis Vance |
| Protein Structure and Molecular Enzymology | Ylva Lindqvist and George Lorimer |
| Molecular Cell Research | Joseph Avruch and Thomas Kreis |
| Gene Structure and Expression | Peter van der Vliet |
| Molecular Basis of Disease | Jack Riordan |
| General Subjects | Minoru Fukuda |
| Reviews on Cancer | David Livingston |

In addition, Keith Tipton (Dublin) is Review Editor for the section Protein Structure and Molecular Enzymology and David Waxman assists the Boston office as Associate Executive Editor.

We said farewell to a number of Executive Editors who have left our ranks after having served BBA in an outstanding manner for many years. Namely, Philip Cohen (Dundee) who was with the Journal from 1982–1994 and was in charge of the receiving office

in Dundee; George Radda (Oxford) who was appointed to the Board in 1976, being chairman from 1989–1994. He set up and managed the Oxford office for many years; Gene Kennedy (Boston, MA) who served on the Board from 1985–1995 and was the driving force behind the establishment of the Boston office; Les Dutton (Philadelphia, PA), Board member from 1989–1996 and since 1981 involved with BBA as Editor of Reviews on Bioenergetics; Jeff Schatz (Basel), who influenced the Molecular Cell Research section from 1992–1995; Karel van Dam (Amsterdam), who spent twelve years, 1984–1996, steering and maintaining the high standard of the Bioenergetics section and Yasuo Kagawa (Tochigi), manager of the receiving office in Tochigi, Japan from 1990–1996. We are all much obliged to these colleagues who invested so much of their valuable time in helping BBA retain its position as one of the world's most comprehensive biochemistry journals.

Changes occurred in the Editorial Board as well. It was decided to limit membership to six years in order to renew the Editorial Board on a regular basis and to bring in new expertise in rapidly expanding areas. This meant that we bade farewell to many of our loyal colleagues who have unfailingly helped us, some for more than twenty-five years, by reviewing or having manuscripts reviewed and who have provided countless constructive suggestions for the continual improvement of BBA. We have recently welcomed several new members to the Editorial Board and in the coming period we plan to expand the Board further to number 100–120 Editors. This will enable us to cover most of the areas in an appropriate fashion.

2. Rapid and stringent reviewing procedures

The manuscript reviewing procedures are continually being optimized. The Editorial Offices, in Amsterdam and Boston, provide optimum support to the Executive Editors in the reviewing process, in order to ensure the best possible selection of reviewers. By using comprehensive reviewer databases, and availing of the latest communication technology, the speed of the reviewing procedure is still increasing. During the last six months we have been successful, on

average, in communicating a first decision to the authors of regular papers within six weeks of receipt of the manuscript. Even faster procedures were introduced recently for handling Rapid Reports, for which special significance and timeliness are the primary criteria for acceptance. Publication speed has been increased by skipping the proof stage. Rapid Reports can now be published within ten weeks. The selection of the most appropriate reviewers not only results in a prompt decision, but also increases the stringency of the reviewing process. Papers that do not advance our knowledge sufficiently are nowadays more easily rejected and this has led to a drop in the acceptance rate. Of every five papers submitted last year, only two were accepted. This meant a reduction of 20% compared to the previous years and will further increase the quality of the Journal.

3. New initiatives

BBA is well-known for its high-quality reviews with a high impact. Separate volumes of reviews on Biomembranes and Cancer are published, each having their own Editorial Advisory Board. In addition mini-reviews appear regularly in most other sections. We plan to increase the frequency of publication of these short, topical reviews on emerging technologies and new developments. Such critical reviews are intended as vehicles for expressing the personal opinion of the author rather than be exhaustive compilations of developments in an entire field. We also plan to publish a number of thematic issues. These issues will be guest-edited and contain invited papers on topics of special interest. Previous examples of such issues in BBA were the special issues on Mitochondrial Diseases and on the European Bioenergetics Conference which proved to be very successful. Another new development has been the introduction of the subsection on Lipids in Signalling and Recognition on the initiative of Henk van den Bosch and Dennis Vance. This section focuses on extracellular signals, lipid mediators and lipid-derived messengers, hot areas in signal transduction. A more focused General Subjects section is also one of our goals. This section will concentrate on new developments in the growing area of Glycobiology, a field in which our new Executive Editor, Minoru Fukuda, excels.

Finally, under the inspired guidance of Editor David Livingston, Reviews on Cancer Online was recently launched on the World Wide Web. This review section aims to provide investigators with a fast and reliable source for reviewing the latest discoveries in the cancer research field. Not only does it contain the much acclaimed regular review articles three months prior to their appearance in print but it also publishes meeting reports highlighting the most compelling conclusions, shortly after the actual meeting has taken place. In addition, Reviews on Cancer Online contains a discussion forum and an alerting service. It is freely available on the Internet at URL: <http://www.elsevier.nl/locate/roco/> or <http://www.elsevier.com/locate/roco/>

4. A journal making history

BBA enjoys a long-standing tradition in scientific publishing, receiving almost 4000 manuscripts each year. This number has been pretty stable over the years despite sharp competition due to the emergence of many new journals. It is only seven years ago that the golden Celebratory Volume 1000 was published witnessing the Journal's decisive role in the history of biochemistry, biophysics, and molecular biology. Currently, BBA progresses at an even more rapid pace; with one issue published every three days, volume 1317 being completed this year.

Next year, BBA will celebrate its 50th anniversary (1947–1997). The year 1997 will witness a matured and at the same time rejuvenated BBA, alive and eager to continue publishing excellent manuscripts into the next century. Whether this will continue to be in the same paper format is doubtful, but one thing is clear: with capable and experienced staff in both the Amsterdam and Boston Editorial Offices, a renewed Board of Executive Editors, a dynamic Editorial Board and a vast number of excellent reviewers world-wide we are convinced that we can continue serving the scientific community by reviewing and publishing manuscripts in a rapid, rigorous and fair manner, be it on paper or on-line.

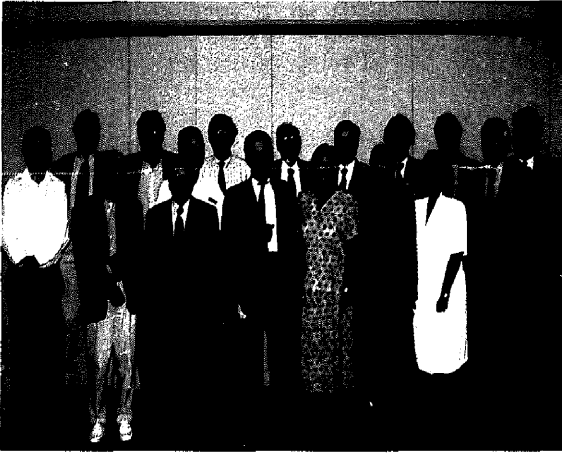
On behalf of the Executive Editors



Peter C. van der Vliet

(*Editor-in-Chief*)

The photograph on the following page was taken at the last Executive Editors meeting, held in Boston, June 1996.



1. Tony Lee, 2. Les Dutton, 3. Thomas Kreis, 4. George Lorimer, 5. Yasuo Kagawa, 6. Karel van Dam, 7. Peter van der Vliet, 8. Jack Riordan, 9. Bill Slater, 10. Ylva Lindqvist, 11. David Waxman, 12. Ann O'Brien (Elsevier Science), 13. Henk van den

Bosch, 14. Denise Wells (Elsevier Science), 15. Albert van der Werf (Elsevier Science), 16. Dennis Vance, 17. Bernard Aleva (Elsevier Science). Missing from photo: Joe Avruch, Mårten Wikström, Minoru Fukuda and Peter Rich.