Cell biology’s journal gets a new look

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The Journal of Cell Biology was the first scholarly publication devoted entirely to the emerging field of cell biology. Over the years, it has defined the field and provided the pages on which our collective progress has been played out. The JCB has always been the preeminent and most highly respected forum for new ideas in cell biology, and my goal since assuming stewardship of the Journal more than two years ago has been to ensure this position of leadership by acting to improve virtually every aspect of its operations, policies, style, and content.

Together with a dedicated and activist editorial board, we have worked hard for the past two years to do just that, first concentrating on substance rather than form. Our review times for regular articles now average less than one month; our new JCB Report format allows for even more rapid review, just over two weeks; and our time to publication following acceptance is just over one month.

We have remained deeply committed to the philosophy of rigorous but fair and scholarly peer review. Every editorial decision, from choosing appropriate reviewers to final dispositions, is handled by your colleagues—our Editorial Board—who treat submissions we receive as they would wish their own manuscripts to be handled. This is the essence of The JCB.

Substance without form, however, can be dull, impeding communication and impact. Thus, it is with great pride and excitement that we announce with this issue the first major redesign of The JCB format in many years. Notice not only the new cover, but also new internal graphics, fonts, and organization, all to make it easier to access and read the journal’s contents. These changes were made with the online version of the Journal closely in mind, as we anticipate that The eJCB will only increase in importance. The design of our web pages has also been updated, and special thanks are due to our Electronic Publishing Manager, Rob O’Donnell, for his extraordinary efforts in coordinating the technical aspects of both the print and online changes.

In addition to using a new, more readable font style in articles, authors should note that we have now moved the Materials and methods section to the end of each article. Mini-Reviews and comments now also have brief abstracts. Our new online formatting algorithms allow early posting of accepted papers on the web, and once again the grouping of published papers by topic rather than by order of acceptance. Online submissions should be available in the near future, as well.

We have also expanded our news material with the help of our new News Editor, William Wells. The JCB “In Brief” section has been renamed “In This Issue”, and a special section called “Research Roundup” has been added to provide us with the means to highlight news and research published elsewhere that is of interest to cell biologists. Keep an eye out for other news items such as “Meeting Reports” and “Features”.

Two final issues bear mentioning. First, in accord with recent initiatives to get journals and magazines to release their content for free on the web six months after publication, we can announce that indeed The JCB has decided to do just that. In fact, we have been releasing our content in this fashion since January, 2001, and using new technology we are now releasing all content for free, without any delay, to over 60 developing nations.

Second, on a personal note, I would like to express my sincere thanks and admiration for a departing Editor. James Nelson has been one of the most committed, hardworking, effective, and energetic Editors ever to be associated with The JCB. He will be stepping down in July to pursue important new challenges at his home institution, Stanford University. No one has done it better, and we will truly miss James’ many contributions to the journal.