Editorial

Change and continuity

When you open *The EMBO Journal*—online or in print—you can usually get down to the business of reading about the latest scientific developments without delay. But this issue requires an editorial commentary. Having quietly celebrated its 21st anniversary last year (the old ‘coming of age’ birthday), some changes have taken place at *The EMBO Journal* as it enters 2004. One of these is that we have now completed our change of publisher to Nature Publishing Group (NPG), a move that was initiated last year with *EMBO Reports*. Coinciding with this, *The EMBO Journal* will have a more extensive web presence, papers will be published online ahead of print, and there are subtle changes to the layout and cover. You will also notice that papers are now categorized according to subject, which will allow those who do not wish to browse through the entire journal to quickly identify papers relevant to their interest. Each paper is assigned one or two of the 18 categories, indicating their relevance to different communities. In an ongoing process, articles published in back issues of the journal from 1997 onwards are also being categorized, and a fully categorized archive will be available from mid-2004. Given that articles in *The EMBO Journal* have a particularly long half-life compared with most other journals (as judged by citations outside the period used for the Citation Index), this is an important addition.

We also expect that the visibility of the journal will increase through access from the much-visited NPG website together with our continued presence on the Highwire site, where access to and from a wide range of other journals is assured. Our papers will continue to be freely available to all 12 months after publication on the NPG and Highwire sites, and via PubMedCentral, and freely available immediately after publication to scientists in the least developed countries through the WHO-brokered HINARI agreement. In addition, one other consequence of the change of publisher is that our authors now retain copyright of their papers as well as the right to self-archive.

This issue also marks the end of an era, with John Tooze stepping down from the role of joint Executive Editor. John

has had a defining influence on *The EMBO Journal*, of which he was the founding editor. His commitment to clear decisions based on sound scientific arguments has ensured a very special place for *The EMBO Journal* in the scientific community worldwide. We can all feel grateful for his dedication and commitment to high standards and wish him well. For the past 10 years, the task of processing the manuscripts submitted to *The EMBO Journal* has been shared between London and Heidelberg, where Iain Mattaj is Executive Editor.

The practical aspects of the transition from a shared action to one located in Heidelberg took place in an orderly manner last year such that all manuscripts are now handled by a committed and experienced team of editors, together with the Executive Editor Iain Mattaj, at the EMBO headquarters. This change happily went unperceived by the authors and referees. What has not changed, however, is our editorial independence and commitment to the highest standards that John brought to the journal when it was founded. And of course ownership of the journal remains with EMBO, a not for profit organization. Decisions will continue to be made by the EMBO team on the basis of input from an active Advisory Editorial Board as well as expert referees from around the world; currently approximately 50% of our referees are non-European, as indeed are the papers we receive and publish.

So at the start of 2004, we hope that you will find that *The EMBO Journal* is maintaining its primary commitment to the scientific community, namely of publishing important papers that have been selected by a fair, rapid and scientifically sound process, and of ensuring that they have high visibility and availability to those who wish to learn from and build on your research.

Frank Gannon
Executive Director
EMBO.

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