SEIBUTSU BUTSURI, the official Japanese journal of the Biophysical Society of Japan

Yasushi Sako^{1,2}

Received: 7 January 2020 / Accepted: 23 January 2020 / Published online: 29 January 2020

© International Union for Pure and Applied Biophysics (IUPAB) and Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany, part of Springer Nature 2020

“SEIBUTSU BUTSURI (SB)”, which means ‘biophysics’ in Japanese, is a predominantly Japanese language science journal that publishes six issues per year. SB was launched on July 1961 as the official journal of the Biophysical Society of Japan (BSJ). From an organizational perspective, the foundations of BSJ were laid in December of 1960, meaning that SB has nearly 60 years of associated history with the BSJ. The latest issue, published at the end of 2019, has the consecutive issue number of 346. When the BSJ and SB started, biophysics was a really new field of science. In the inaugural first issue of SB, Masao Kotani—the first president of the BSJ—expressed a hope that SB would help to make a bridge between the diverse backgrounds of the BSJ members which included biochemistry, physiology, agriculture, engineering, mathematics, and so on (Kotani 1961). In its modern form SB has two major roles: (1) publication of scientific articles on the topic of biophysics, and (2) providing information on the professional and social activities of the BSJ and its members.

With regard to the first role, SB is a peer reviewed journal that originally encouraged the submission of original papers. However, SB’s role has changed somewhat since the foundation in 2005 of “Biophysics,” the official international journal of the BSJ (the journal changed the name to “Biophysics and Physicobiology, BPPB” in 2015). At the present time, all scientific articles submitted to SB must be based on original paper(s) by the author(s) already appearing or accepted in/by a peer reviewed journal. Scientific articles in SB are categorized into 5 types: Commentary (6 pages), Review (4 pages), Topic (2 pages), Theory/Experimental Technique (4 pages),

and Tip (2 pages). Whereas Review articles are expected to concentrate on the submitting authors own works, Commentaries may include wider perspective of the related fields. Topics are for the introduction of authors’ recent specific work. Theory/Experimental Technique covers new ideas and technologies developed by the authors, and Tips describe small but useful methods of research. The domain of biophysics is broad, and it is difficult or almost impossible for a researcher to cover the progress over the entire field. For non-native English readers the fact that the vast majority of the world’s scientific articles are published in English can also present additional obstacles to the casual perusal of scientific papers far from his/her own expertise. With regard to this point, SB aims to be a useful information source by allowing Japanese researchers to grasp the trends and developments of the entire field of biophysics, not only in recent days but also by retracing developments throughout its 60 years of published record. Another issue often pointed out by BSJ members, most of whom are teaching staff of Japanese universities, is that there are relatively few good textbooks of biophysics. To fill this role SB requests authors to imagine master course students as the main readers. For Commentaries, a graduate student or young postdoctoral researcher is assigned to one of the three reviewer roles. The goal is that someday selected articles in SB will be edited into a textbook of biophysics.

With regard to its second major role, SB acts as a cohesive glue informing on the activities of the BSJ and by promoting professional and social networking among its members. SB has two categories for this role: “Lounge” (2 pages) and “Echo” (1 page). Reports of attendance at international and domestic symposia, including the IUPAB Congress, and the selection process of the awardees for young members at the BSJ Annual Meeting usually appear in the Lounge section. BSJ members can express opinions to the wider BSJ and SB associated communities in Echo. In addition, activity reports from the local branches of the BSJ and the Society of Young Scientists in Biophysics, along with letters from BSJ members working in foreign countries, are shown in SB. A regular

✉ Yasushi Sako
sako@riken.jp

¹ SEIBUTSU BUTSURI, Suita, Japan

² Clusters for Pioneering Research, RIKEN, 2-1 Hirosawa, Wako 351-0198, Japan

feature article called “Prolusion” is a short essay written by senior members of BSJ in turn, which is often the most popular article in SB.

An important aspect of SB is that it is an open access journal. This means that anyone can freely download recent issues of SB from the Web site of BSJ (<https://www.biophys.jp/pub/pub01.html>), and all articles are archived in J-STAGE (<https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/browse/biophys/-char/ja>), a platform of E-journals in Japan managed by the Japan Science and Technology Agency. The SB editorial team strongly encourages international readers to peruse these open access articles. Even if you cannot read Japanese, the titles and abstracts are in English, and you can also obtain significant meaning from the informative graphical abstracts. The open access rules of SB are geared to strongly promote BSJ membership. Only BSJ members can freely submit articles to SB, which they do at no cost. Non-members are able to submit articles upon recommendation of a BSJ Member. SB sometimes edits special issues on a specific subject, for example, the first issue on 2020, “Shape, Pattern, and Dynamics Generated by Collective Motion of Cells and Organisms”. BSJ members can suggest and participate in the compilation of special issues as guest editors. Although SB is basically a Japanese language journal, submission in English is not prohibited (e.g., Li and Komatsuzaki 2014; Hayashi 2014). Readers of this Commentary may be recommended by some BSJ member to write an article in SB. If you have any pertinent news or opinion germane to the readers of SB, I invite you to please contact the editorial office via e-mail (biophys@nacos.com).

The Editorial board of SB consists of about 10 Editors in addition to an Editor-in-Chief and two Vice-Editor-in-Chiefs. One Board member of the BSJ takes a rotating position in the SB Editorial board. All of them have two-year terms, and one half of the Editorial board members are elected anew every year. Candidates for the election are recommended by the Editors at the end of his/her term, Editor-in-Chief, and Board members of BSJ, are then, elected by the BSJ board member and the Editor-in-Chief. As of the present day, about 20% of the Editors are female. This percentage may not be enough but it is on a continuing upward trajectory. Most of the Editors are in their 30’s~early 40’s, and their association with SB provides them with a good chance to experience a collective work effort for the betterment of the BSJ. Editors handle the submitted articles by requesting external reviewers and making judgements as for their acceptance or rejection.

Editors also nominate and request authors for the submission of new articles. As mentioned at the outset SB is published every two months (6 issues per year) and each issue includes 5~8 scientific articles. In addition, Editors regularly meet to actively discuss the future direction of SB. All in all, during their term of duty Editors need to work hard for SB. Articles for social networking are mainly handled by the Editor-in-Chief. Vice-Editors-in-Chief are the busiest persons who need to do the final check of all articles, and due to this reason SB increased the number of them in 2020 from one to two. One of the two Vice-Editors-in-Chief has a cross appointment with the Editorial board of BPPB to strengthen interaction between the two journals. We have face-to-face Editorial board meetings three times per year to determine everything on SB. The SB Committee is under regulation of the Committee for Publication in BSJ headed by one of the two Vice-Presidents of BSJ.

Looking towards the future, it is safe to say that the roles of SB will continue to evolve so as to complement the expansion of the activities of BPPB and keep up with the increasing use of the Internet for social communication. Undoubtedly, an increase in the numbers of non-Japanese BSJ members will also act to bring about more changes in the roles of SB. Nonetheless, considerable numbers of BSJ members are of the opinion that there is meaning for BSJ to maintain a Japanese journal. *Science* is obviously an international activity and there is no biophysics specific to any one country. However, each nation or language has its own way of thinking, which helps to make the human culture richer and more plentiful of diversity. I close this Commentary by asking a question to the reader—Is it a funny idea that SB will contribute to biophysics in the world by fostering new ideas from Japanese-speaking people?

References

- Hayashi K (2014) New logo for the Biophysical Society of Japan. SEIBUTSU BUTSURI 54:230–232
- Kotani M (1961) Hakkani ni atatte (at the launch of our journal). SEIBUTSU BUTSURI 1:3
- Li C-B, Komatsuzaki T (2014) Handling noisy data from single molecule experiments. SEIBUTSU BUTSURI 54:257–258

Publisher’s note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.