Eight Years Behind the Masthead


The editorship of Circulation Research changes as of this issue. We wish Dr. Marbán and his new Associate Editors well and take this opportunity to highlight some of the key features of our editorship, which began in 1991 at Boston and ends in 1999 at Pittsburgh.

It is important to keep in mind that in 1991 the application of molecular biology to cardiovascular research was well underway. Our goal at that time was not only to capitalize on the new science that was emerging but also to integrate it with physiology. This was difficult to accomplish, since the two scientific camps enjoyed little communication. We believe one of the major strengths of this Journal is its place as a forum to present the best of both of these scientific disciplines. At present, most articles use at least some part of a molecular approach, but most often combine it with some functional data. This integrative approach is becoming more popular in medical schools as well as at the National Institutes of Health in terms of new programs.

A second goal was to incorporate more vascular biology into Circulation Research. We believe this effort has also been successful, as reflected by the increasing number of basic vascular biology papers published in the Journal. Currently, at least 50% of the manuscripts published deal primarily with the vessel rather than the myocardium (Figure 1).

A third goal was to involve the European and Asian scientific communities to a greater extent in the Journal. With the help of European and Asian Associate Editors and increased membership on the Editorial Board, this effort has been successful, as reflected by the demographics of our manuscripts shown in Figure 2. Interestingly, slightly less than 50% of the total number of manuscripts received were from the United States, whereas the number of manuscripts published from the United States exceeded 50% of the total. We believe that the international participation in this Journal will increase further in the next few years.

The fourth goal was to improve the time to review and the time to publication as well as to improve the profile of the Journal, as reflected by the Institute for Scientific Information impact factor. Improvement in these areas is summarized by the distribution shown in Figure 3. While the time from submission to first decision has decreased by nearly half (Figure 4). Likewise, the Journal’s manuscript acceptance rate has also been cut in half, decreasing from 49% to 22% (Figure 5). Although time from acceptance to publication has gone down by approximately one third (Figure 6), it still needs to be reduced further. However, that is in the hands of the publisher. Notably, the Journal’s impact factor has jumped from 5.37 to 8.44 (Figure 7). Importantly, Circulation Research rates even higher in terms of long-term impact factor. When impact factor is analyzed over several years, Circulation Research jumps to number 15 of all medical journals.

Although progress has been made, there is ample opportunity for the new team to improve on our record. Indeed, this Journal is poised for another stride forward.

We appreciate having had the opportunity to serve the American Heart Association and the cardiovascular research scientific community. Most importantly, we extend our appreciation to all of the individuals who made the success of Circulation Research possible. These include the hardworking and diligent office staff, the Scientific Publishing Committee, who accepted our suggestion to provide the financial support that allowed for communication by fax and Federal Express, one of the key factors in the reduced time for review of manuscripts, and the Editorial Board and the scientific community, who have done such a superb job in reviewing manuscripts in a timely fashion and submitting manuscripts of high quality. The histogram reflecting the distribution of review times by Editorial Board members appears in Figure 8.

There were difficult times as well. The most difficult involved moving the Editorial Office from Boston to Pittsburgh in the midst of our tenure. Additional problems encountered included overlapping submissions from some authors and a surprisingly high incidence of negative responses from some reviewers, as reflected by the distribution shown in Figure 8. Whereas many members of the Editorial Board never refused to review a manuscript, the percentage of negative responses from some was surprisingly high.

It is tempting to muse that reports of this nature will change radically in the next century. As noted above, we began our editorship after a revolution in basic research and now end the editorship with a new revolution in information dissemination underway. We predict that in 5 years from now, different yardsticks will be used to measure the success of a journal, and that with more and more information available electronically, the very role of classical journals will change. We trust that the careful nature of the peer review process characteristic of Circulation Research will ensure its place in the future.

References

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Figure 1. Vascular vs cardiac biology. This graph illustrates the percentage of vascular biology papers published compared with the percentage of cardiac biology papers published during the last 1½ years.

Figure 2. Demographics of manuscripts received vs published. This graph shows the percentage of papers received vs published from the different regions of the world during the period 1996 through 1998.

Figure 3. Manuscripts received. This graph depicts the increase in the total number of manuscripts submitted to Circulation Research.
Figure 4. Submission to first decision. This graph illustrates the improvement in the time from submission to first decision compared with the previous editorship.

Figure 5. Acceptance rate. This graph shows the steady decline in the Journal’s manuscript acceptance rate.

Figure 6. Acceptance to publication. This graph depicts the reduction in the time from acceptance to publication since the current editors took over in 1991.
Figure 7. Impact factor. This graph shows the increase in the Journal's impact factor.

Figure 8. Editorial board reviews. The histogram on the left illustrates the varying review times for the members of the editorial board since January 1, 1998, and the histogram on the right illustrates the percentage of negative responses from editorial board members who were asked to review a new submission.
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