

Editorial

Published: 18 June 2002

Journal of Biology 2002, 1:1

The electronic version of this article is the complete one and can be found online at <http://jbiol.com/content/1/1/1>

© 2002 BioMed Central Ltd ISSN 1475-4924

The small number of journals in which a great number of scientists strive to publish their best work share certain characteristics. They are edited by professional editors rather than by scientists. They aim to cover a broad subject area. They reject many of the papers submitted to them without review, on the grounds that the work is of insufficient interest to their readers. The published papers are often accompanied by comments written by either working scientists or science journalists. Importantly, the authors of research articles in these journals usually have to assign copyright to the journal's publisher, and readers or their institutions have to pay a subscription charge in order to access the papers.

In launching a new journal that aspires to join this 'top rank', we have chosen to adopt an approach that differs from the above in two important ways. First, no subscription fee will be necessary to read the research articles in *Journal of Biology*. Second, authors will retain copyright of their papers. These are the principles of open access publishing, to which *Journal of Biology* and its publisher, BioMed Central, are committed. Although still in its infancy, open access publishing has major benefits for the scientific community, and it is supported by a ground swell of opinion

among the scientific community and, increasingly, by librarians, scientific institutes, and funding bodies (see the Comment article in this issue by Peter Suber). The advantages are especially great for papers of exceptionally broad interest, as anyone with an interest in the research can access it without hindrance anywhere and at any time, and authors and their funders can distribute their article as they wish, ensuring maximum dissemination of their work.

Journal of Biology also differs from traditional 'top rank' journals in a number of other ways. We believe that the more important the research article, the more it deserves the best treatment: thorough, fair and fast refereeing by the most appropriate referees, effective presentation of the article itself both on the web and in print, and the informative promotion of the article to all interested parties. For example, to provide readers with different perspectives on the work, *Journal of Biology* will provide two commentaries for each research article, at least one of which will be written by a scientist. To provide authors with the best service, decisions on which articles to publish in the *Journal of Biology* will be in the combined hands of a scientist Editor-in-Chief and a professional Editor. No article will be rejected without the advice of either a working

scientist in the relevant field, the Editor-in-Chief, or one of the eminent scientists of the editorial board. Moreover, when a paper is refereed, at least one reviewer will be chosen from a list of referees provided by the authors.

Until now, supporters of the open access movement have not had a top rank biology journal to publish in. *Journal of Biology* aims to be such a journal. It will be published primarily online, where each research paper will always be freely available to all, from the day it is published. A print form of the journal will have an initial circulation of at least 75,000 life scientists. Each issue may contain only a single research article and its associated commentaries, as is the case for this first issue. We hope that you will become a regular reader of the *Journal of Biology* and will aspire to publish your most interesting research in it. We will do our best to publicize your paper, and you will be helping to promote open access publishing.

Martin Raff, Editor-in-Chief,
Journal of Biology

Theodora Bloom, Editor,
Journal of Biology

Peter Newmark, Editorial Director,
BioMed Central