
Editorial

This is the beginning of the ninth volume of *Molecular Biology of the Cell (MBC)*, and once again it is time to take stock of our progress. It has been an excellent year. The number of papers published rose by 25%, representing a 27% increase in submissions, and resulting in a 24% increase in printed pages. Again this year the consensus of the Associate Editors and Editorial Board is that we are getting not only more papers, but also significantly better ones. Every year a large number of authors take advantage of our commitment to thorough and fair review by scientists; publishing decisions made on scientific grounds only; helpful reviews, even when the news is not good; no arbitrary page limits; an editorial office that is speedy and efficient as well as accessible and responsive; and, not least, excellence in reproduction.

One of the important features of *MBC* is that it is a creature of the American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB), a not-for-profit professional society whose aims are therefore intellectual and not commercial. The editors and staff are accountable to the ASCB Council, and we are grateful for the Council's continuing support and enthusiasm. The Council has made clear its support of the mission of *MBC*: to facilitate scientific communication among ASCB members and cell biologists around the world. Consistent with this mission, we proposed this year to Council that *MBC* become available in full text over the internet. With its usual decisive energy, the Council, with the guidance of a subcommittee ably chaired by Richard Hynes, considered, debated, and enthusiastically decided to support this initiative, making it possible to bring *MBC* online in record time: the first online issue was December 1997. The internet address is: <http://www.molbiolcell.org>. Readers may find it useful to remember that *MBC* is cited in bibliographies as *Mol. Biol. Cell*, making it easy to remember the internet address.

Online publication of *MBC* could have been done through any of several providers of this kind of service. The editors, staff, and the Council decided to work with HighWire Press (a not-for-profit unit of the Stanford University Libraries), which also is the service provider for many of our peer journals, including the *Journal of Cell Biology*, the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *Science*, *Cell*, *Genetics*, and many others. For the next year, access will be free to everyone; after that *MBC* and the ASCB Council have agreed to make the most permissive possible choices concerning access that are consistent with financial stability. For example, we will sell institutional libraries site licenses along with print subscriptions to *MBC*, giving anybody with internet service through the same institution unfettered access to *MBC Online*. Furthermore, we have chosen to allow direct links to *MBC Online* papers from the reference pages of articles in other online journals (including all of the ones listed above) to everyone, even those with no subscriptions. If the desired reference is not available online, the abstract page from PubMed will appear instead. Many (but not all) of the other electronic journals have made the same choices.

For individuals without access through institutions with library subscriptions to *MBC*, we hope to provide *MBC Online* at zero or nominal cost. Obviously it is advantageous for both authors and readers of *MBC* to encourage institutional libraries to subscribe to the *MBC/MBC Online* package. It is my view that the combination of print and online will be a lasting one and that scientists will long appreciate the advantages of the combination of print and online over either alone.

The online version of *MBC* also presents opportunities for enhancing the journal's service

to its authors and readers. At the most recent meeting of the Editorial Board, *MBC*'s editors agreed that we should move expeditiously to provide enhancements to *MBC* including online data not possible to present in print. Among these are video (very popular now with the advent of green fluorescent protein), three-dimensional images (from confocal and deconvolving microscopy and even electron microscopy), and very large datasets (such as one might anticipate as genomic methods like expression microarrays come into general use). The Editorial Board agreed that *MBC* should be at the frontier in these areas, because our authors and readers are increasingly using these methods to do their research.

Finally, it is with very mixed feelings that we report the decision of our founding Managing Editor, Rosalba Kampman, to leave us to become Executive Director of the Biophysical Society. On the one hand, we are delighted for her and wish her good fortune in her new and challenging position. On the other, acknowledging her crucial role in the success *MBC* now enjoys, we see also that we will miss Ro in many ways. More than anyone else, Ro is responsible for the efficient, friendly, and encouraging style of the editorial process at *MBC*. Editors of our peer journals are routinely amazed at how much *MBC* does so well with so few staff. Indeed, several have paid Ro the ultimate compliment by copying exactly her methods. So we wish Ro all the best, conveying our thanks for an extraordinary contribution to both *MBC* and the ASCB.

David Botstein
Editor-in-Chief
