

Crossing the boundaries

Starting a journal with “biology” in the title would not have been high on our list of career expectations when we completed our degrees. Both of us started professional life as strict organic chemists, with little knowledge of biology and not much expectation that we would ever need to know any. Most chemists see only the areas of biological research that are relevant to medicinal chemistry, and these were, in the past, too often confined to a biological assay that is ill-defined and poorly understood. Although one might find interesting natural products that inhibited such an assay, it would be difficult to know why the drug worked or how to improve it.

How fast things have changed. Molecular biology and structural biology increasingly make it possible to define the terms of a biological problem with a precision that is useful to chemists. As a result, creative chemical approaches (especially the use of synthetic organic chemistry to produce new molecules for study) can increasingly contribute to a sophisticated understanding of how biomolecules function. While traditional medicinal chemistry will no doubt remain important for many years, we hope and expect that the revolutions in chemistry and biology will, in the foreseeable future, produce a revolution in medicine that is based on a profound understanding of the molecules involved in the basic processes of life. Now seems to be the perfect time to start a journal that will help to make the true horizons of biology accessible to chemists, and the progress made by chemists in exploring and manipulating biological systems more available to biologists.

It seems to us that we are witnessing what is, perhaps, a cyclical evolutionary event in the progress of science: a combination of two different approaches to one problem is leading to a melding of both approaches to form a whole new discipline, with most of the advantages of both of the old ones and a great deal of hybrid vigor. This journal is dedicated to speeding this process, by improving the understanding between those who think of themselves as chemists and those who think of themselves as biologists (as the boundaries become ever more blurred, these terms become more a matter of how we were trained than which problems we are now addressing). We will select the papers to be published in the journal not only for excellence in the research, but also for their interest to both groups; we will also require that they be clearly written, with the significance for a general audience explicitly spelled out in a special section. The journal also has two features which will, we hope, be particularly important in opening up possibilities for collaboration and exchange of ideas. These are the short, readable minireviews, modeled after our sister publication

Current Biology's Dispatches, and a unique section titled Crosstalk, intended to provide a forum for a specific call to action. In the first Crosstalk, in this issue, a biologist provides a perspective on how a modification of the combinatorial chemistry approach could prove instrumental in the solution of a number of different biological problems. It is almost certain that some of the ideas expressed in this section in the coming years will prove controversial or impractical; even so, we are confident that the discussion that such pieces will no doubt provoke will prove fruitful in some way, if only in allowing a larger audience than usual to appreciate the details of a problem.

As well as having a unique mission, *Chemistry & Biology* will be different in practical terms from almost every other journal. Like the other Current Biology Ltd publications, *Current Biology* and *Structure*, the journal has a commitment to swift, high-quality reviewing and rapid manuscript processing and publication, and makes every effort to ensure that the quality of the presentation of a paper is as high as can reasonably be achieved. We were attracted to this publisher in part because of the distinctive presentation of *Current Biology* and *Structure*, and they have not disappointed us. You will see, in this issue, that the rate of manuscript processing even in the start-up phase has been cause for pride, and for this we thank the staff of the journal in both the San Francisco and London offices, especially Rebecca Ward and Deborah Zimmerman. We particularly thank our outstanding associate editors, Patrick Baeuerle, Gerald Joyce, and Gregory Verdine; it is no exaggeration to say that the journal would have been impossible without them. We also thank the many members of the editorial board who have offered advice, contributions, and other support.

Chemistry & Biology is the first journal dedicated to the expanding intellectual area in which chemical approaches and biological disciplines overlap. We therefore expected a good deal of interest from those working in the area, but have been astonished and gratified by the tremendous interest and breadth of support we have found in the community. We now aim to establish *Chemistry & Biology* as a high quality, high profile, and above all interesting journal. Your suggestions are welcome, and should be addressed to the editorial office in San Francisco.

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