

EDITORIAL

50th Anniversary and the Future

The 50th anniversary year for the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* is now history!

It was a good time to strengthen connections, done so effectively by “birthday cake” receptions at the Spring (Orlando, FL) and Fall (Boston, MA) National Meetings and a special reception at the Boston meeting (**Figure 1**). Over 100 American Chemical Society (ACS) staff, JAFAC Advisory Board members, Associate Editors and staff, Agricultural and Food Chemistry Division and Agrochemicals Division officers, authors, and other friends of the Journal attended this reception. A highlight was the presentation of a plaque to the Journal by ACS Immediate Past President Attila Pavlath and ACS Publications Director Bob Bovenschulte (**Figure 1**). Irv Liener, JAFAC Editor from 1982 to 1999, joined me in receiving this recognition on behalf of the Journal. The Journal’s operations are distributed among six editorial offices (including one in Germany), ACS headquarters in Washington, DC, and the Publications Division office in Columbus, OH; plus, our Advisory Board members are from all over the world, so we have very few opportunities to meet en masse. This made August 19, 2002, in Boston a particularly memorable day for all of us associated with JAFAC.

The Journal’s “vital statistics” are positive and continue to improve. Receipt to print and receipt to Web publication for 2002 averaged 25 and 20 weeks, respectively, continuing the trend to improvement in these categories evident in 2001. The number of manuscripts submitted increased (from 1700 in 2001 to over 2000 estimated for 2002). The number of pages published in 2002 was estimated at press time to be around 8000 (versus 6470 in 2001), but it is not quite so obvious in issue thickness now that JAFAC is published biweekly. The Journal’s new (2002) cover and format have received many compliments. Authors responded positively to the new option, begun February 2002, of submitting manuscripts electronically, and already in this first year of offering the option, about 40% of authors chose to do so. Reviewers have been somewhat slower to adopt electronic methods of receiving and returning reviews, but as the system improves this will undoubtedly become more popular. A 100% “paperless” journal—from submission through Web publishing—is still in the future, but important steps (including Web availability in PDF format of all past issues of JAFAC to April 1953) are being made.

The Journal initiated a new feature in 2002, first called “Visioning” articles because they were to look at areas of agricultural and food chemistry in terms of future research and

development needs, but now renamed “*Perspectives*”. The first of these, authored by Willis Wheeler, covered agrochemicals including the transition to less toxic and more environmentally acceptable pest control methods accelerated by the Food Quality Protection Act. A *Perspective* on bioactive natural products by Russell Molyneux was published in November, and publication of one by Lawrie K. Creamer on the chemistry of dairy products was made in December 2002. *Perspectives* will be a standing feature available to authors. They are not a substitute for technical reviews, which are still encouraged, but give authors an option to explore needs and opportunities in a less technical format. Antioxidants—methods for evaluation and health implications—are a current hot topic, discussed vigorously at the Advisory Board meeting in Boston, that may spur one or more *Perspectives*. Agricultural biotechnology is another example. Biobased products is still another. Authors should contact me with their ideas for *Perspective* articles.

The Journal will continue to address the timeliness and quality of manuscripts. In the timeliness area, further development and use of electronic processing, including reviews and galley proofs, should allow us to remain at or below 15 weeks from receipt to acceptance, 20 weeks from receipt to Web publication, and 25 weeks from receipt to print publication. If we can trim a few weeks off these parameters without sacrificing quality, we will do so. Our editorial offices—now six in number—and editorial office staff—now 13 plus several temporary or part-time helpers—continue to increase in efficiency. The peer review process is a key to both speed and quality. Thanks to a major push the past three years, including the institution of the requirement that authors submit four names of potential reviewers, we have a much more robust list of valuable peer reviewers. See the List of Reviews in this issue with the names of our 2824 reviewers in 2002. We will be providing our peer reviewers with more guidance on what to look for in manuscripts in the coming year and continue to remind authors of their critical role in providing high-quality, innovative, technically accurate, and relevant manuscripts. Our rejection rate has been at about 30% in 2001 and 2002, but there is no target percentage so as we receive higher proportions of quality manuscripts, the rejection rate will adjust accordingly.

We will also continue to highlight innovative manuscripts for publicity and feedback to authors. In 2002, over a dozen JAFAC manuscripts, ranging from coffee’s potential role in reducing tooth decay to the antioxidant properties of red wine,



Figure 1. (Top left) The Editor and several of the Associate Editors prepare to celebrate the Journal's 50th birthday with cake. (Top right) ACS Immediate Past President Attila Pavlath (left) and Publications Division Director Bob Bovenschulte (right) present a plaque to former JAFCh Editor Irv Liener (second from left) and current Editor Jim Seiber (second from right). (Bottom) The Editor, Associate Editors, and editorial staff gather with Mary Scanlan, Publications Division, in Boston.

were further publicized by *Chemical & Engineering News*, *Chemistry in Britain*, and a variety of other technical and nontechnical media. Please help us out by pointing out the newsworthiness of your manuscript submissions.

In closing, I thank Mary Scanlan and the ACS staff, Associate Editors Marshall Phillips, John Finley, Russell Molyneux, Peter Schieberle, and Willis Wheeler and their staff assistants (**Figure 1**), and our Advisory Board members, for making 2002 a year filled with exciting events and new ideas for the future. Loreen Kleinschmidt and Ann Ray keep the editorial office in Davis, CA, running smoothly as they help in instituting new electronic

processing tools. I especially thank our authors and coauthors (around 4000), peer reviewers (over 2800), and subscribers for continuing their support of the Journal.

The first 50 years of the Journal are now history, but the future is ripe with opportunity for all of us as we approach new research discoveries in agricultural and food chemistry!

JAMES N. SEIBER

Editor-In-Chief

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