



## Editorial

Over the coming months, *Phytochemistry* will announce a number of important and major changes that will broaden the scope and enhance the appeal of the journal. This is a timely point to introduce such changes: we begin our passage into the next millennium with great anticipation and optimism, while able to look back with gratitude to the many authors whose contributions, over several decades, have given the journal the prestige that it enjoys today.

*Professor Jeffrey B. Harborne and Phytochemistry's Golden Jubilee.* It is with sadness, that at this very time, however, we announce the forthcoming retirement of one of the Journal's founding fathers, Professor Jeffrey B. Harborne, F.R.S., as Regional Editor. Since its very beginning in 1961, Professor Harborne's name has been synonymous with the Journal, which now celebrates its golden jubilee (50th volume) under his most effective and caring stewardship. The readership will be both pleased and reassured to learn, however, that Professor Harborne, while retiring from active editorial duty, will nevertheless maintain an important role within the Journal, namely that of Honorary Editor.

Elsevier will hold a special celebration in honour of Professor Harborne's retirement at Kew Gardens on 22nd July 1999. Those able to attend this special symposium will have the wonderful opportunity to thank him personally for his magnificent efforts and dedication to *Phytochemistry* since its inception. For those who cannot attend, please join us now in thanking Professor Harborne for his untiring, faithful and unfailing dedication. Words themselves cannot more effectively conjure up the sense of the unselfish and sustained commitment to the betterment of the journal, and to science itself, than the very name of Jeffrey B. Harborne.

*The Regional Editorial Team: G. Paul Bolwell, Norman G. Lewis and Dieter Strack.* In July 1999, the Regional Editorial Team will take up the task of moving the journal forward into the next millennium. This is both exciting and worthwhile: the interest in plants has never been higher, and industry is already witnessing the beginning of a biotechnological revolution in

the use of plants for humanity's use. The new team will consist of G. Paul Bolwell, Norman G. Lewis and Dieter Strack. Professor Bolwell will cover the regions within the United Kingdom, Africa, The Commonwealth and the Rest of the World, whereas Dr. Norman G. Lewis will be responsible for the Americas and East Asia. Dr. Dieter Strack will cover both Continental Europe and Russia. A forthcoming issue will profile each of the Regional Editors, and their professional interests.

*Issues Dedicated to Structural Elucidation.* One of the immediate changes to the current format and style of *Phytochemistry* will be the publication of issues devoted to structural elucidation. This change is in response to many thoughtful suggestions raised by the *Phytochemistry* readership, who have expressed the strong desire for an effective and interesting means for recording plant structures whilst maintaining the readability of the Journal. The challenge to *Phytochemistry* is, therefore, to introduce a system that will ultimately facilitate the easy electronic retrieval of any particular plant natural product structure.

Depending upon the source accessed, there are some 250–350,000 different plant species, many of which have metabolites either common to other species or which only marginally differ. In this information age, how is such information to be readily and effectively accessed? Other areas of science have met similar formidable challenges, with perhaps the best example being the useful data bases employed for accessing and storing gene sequence information. A growing number of the readers are aware that gene sequences present in many plant systems are routinely archived and accessed only as needed, with very few being published directly.

A similar challenge, and thus opportunity, is offered by the massive, yet often quite routine, structural elucidation reports of plant natural products which are of known or expectable structure. In this regard, the Editorial team recognizes the need for ready electronic access to this growing body of knowledge on the constituents of various plants, whether for chemotaxonomical and/or evolutionary considerations, or for

insight into operative biochemical pathways. Moreover, such information is also needed in order to design and/or identify new strategies directed to plant pathway metabolic engineering, or in searching for possible sources of phytochemicals as medicinal agents or as intermediates for chemical transformations.

*Phytochemistry* is thus faced with the challenge of finding a means for more readily compiling and accessing the routine structural investigations on constituents from various plant sources, the reports of which now vie for regular journal space. Many of these compounds, of outstanding interest in their own right, are attained at such a high frequency that a means of archiving them for subsequent electronic access is both long overdue and essential. As a first step to meeting this challenge, *Phytochemistry* will introduce issues, of which Volume 51, Number 8 is the first example. These will be published two to three times per year

and are dedicated entirely to such routine structural elucidation reports. In this way, the body of knowledge will continue to grow without adversely affecting the general readability of the regular journal articles.

Initially, these issues of the journal will follow the same format as for regular papers and then will move to a new format where only the most important elements of the plant source and compound structures will be provided in the journal report. The longer term goal for the Editorial team is to provide on-line access to the compiled listing of such compounds, their varied sources, and the spectroscopic data acquired in determining their structures.

*Other journal developments.* Please keep a close eye on the journal over the next few months, as a number of changes of importance to the readership will be announced periodically.