

Letter from the Editor

It has been a privilege to be the editor of *The American Journal of Human Genetics* for the past six years, which was a period of great advancement in our field and with our *Journal*. The completion of the human genome sequence occurred during this time, and this has revolutionized how we now conduct research in human genetics. Issues of open access were much debated during this period, and this is a subject on which, I am proud to say, our *Journal* is very proactive and in sync with most proposals aimed at freeing up the scientific literature to a wide audience. Also during this time, we completed tasks initiated by my predecessor, Dr. Peter Byers, such as our electronic submission and review system. I am indebted to Peter not only for his passing on to me an ever-improving *Journal* but also for his sage advice as to how to be an effective editor and still get some sleep at night. I am very pleased that we streamlined the editorial process to allow a very rapid turnaround, such that decisions on manuscripts are made more quickly and those that are accepted reach publication much sooner. The willingness of the University of Chicago Press to be flexible and to help us achieve this goal was much appreciated. These changes coincide with a jump in our impact factor of nearly two full points. Of course, an outstanding editorial office staff accomplished this, not I. In particular, Carissa Gilman, the managing editor, and Kate Garber, the deputy editor, deserve special recognition for sticking with the *Journal* during its time at Emory, implementing many of these improvements, and making the *Journal* user-friendly to both authors and reviewers. I thank them profusely for making the job of editor much less of a burden than it is generally perceived to be.

Being editor has developed into a very enjoyable activity. It is a singular opportunity to learn in depth all

the diverse scientific disciplines that actually compose what we refer to as “human genetics.” I came to enjoy not only population genetics, particularly those studies linking molecular data with historical accounts of population movement and/or dynamics, but also, surprisingly to me, the intricacies of statistical genetics. Indeed, the only reason to step down is for the health of the *Journal*. An editor, by the very nature of the beast, has to be a somewhat subjective judge and jury. Most papers we receive are technically sound, and most would be of interest to at least some of our readers. Being unable to publish all these papers, then, requires decisions resting upon the editor’s perception of widespread interest, utility to the field, and general impact. This is a problem, since any practicing scientist has inherent biases, likes, and dislikes. If someone stays in the position too long, the journal begins to take on these personal attributes and morphs into the editor’s weekly reader, rather than into the broad-based, society-controlled journal it is and should remain. Thus, the periodic change in editor is a very healthy event for our *Journal*.

Fortunately, we have a very able new editor, Dr. Cynthia Morton. She brings a fresh perspective, new ideas, and, yes, her own likes and dislikes. The trick is that they surely will be different from my own. So, with apologies to all the authors who may have inadvertently submitted papers on topics off my radar screen, we now can hit the reset button and watch as Cynthia takes the *Journal* to even greater heights. I wish her the best of luck.

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