



## Editorial

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# *Proceedings B*: moving forward to meet new challenges

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*Editor-in-Chief*

I would like to begin this editorial by thanking Professor Michael Hassell FRS for his careful stewardship of *Proceedings B* over the past six years as Editor-in-Chief (E-I-C). The journal has shown upward trajectory under his leadership with a 65% growth in submissions, an overall improvement in citation metrics, and a diversification of content, including research on many aspects of organismal biology. With the help of successive Publishing Editors, Vicki Millen and Emilie Aimé, Michael has strengthened the editorial board and improved the work flow in the editorial office so that today, thanks to an outstanding group of Editors, Associate Editors and staff, the journal runs smoothly with an impressive 67 days from submission to continuous online publication. I want to particularly thank Michael for the sage advice he has given me since I was offered the position of E-I-C earlier this year. Taking on the leadership of a journal with an editorial board of approximately 100, and 3000 submissions each year, is not something one does lightly. Michael's calm assurance that being E-I-C of *Proceedings B* was a rewarding experience and that the journal was in good hands, thanks to a great team in London, was influential in my decision to accept. Thank you Michael for all you have done for the journal, and enjoy your retirement and respite from editorial duties.

Occasional editorials of this type are hardly a 'must read' in a journal. Nevertheless, I thought it might be useful for our readers to know something about the new E-I-C at *Proceedings B* and my qualifications for the job. I received my PhD from the University of California, Berkeley in 1977 and have been a faculty member at the University of Toronto since then, with an appointment in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. I have broad research interests in evolution, ecology and systematics, but am particularly interested in evolutionary transitions in reproductive systems and the ecology and genetics of biological invasions. My laboratory at Toronto uses a wide range of approaches from muddy boots ecology and natural history observations, to comparative biology, and more recently genomics. I have always enjoyed editorial work and have served on the editorial boards of a number of journals including *Evolution*, *Journal of Evolutionary Biology*, *Molecular Ecology*, *Journal of Ecology* and *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*. I served as an Editor at *Proceedings B* under the leadership of Professor William Hill FRS and found the experience enormously stimulating. This was another factor in the decision to become E-I-C starting in 2015. Although filling Bill and Michael's large shoes gives me anxious moments in the early morning hours, I have always liked challenges and I am looking forward immensely to my 4-year term and the opportunity to shape the future direction of one of the world's leading biological journals.

One of the primary determinants of what makes a journal really outstanding is the quality of the editorial board. During the past month, and with the help of Emilie Aimé, we have been able to recruit 34 new Associate Editors and two Editors to replace retiring members of the *Proceedings B* team. I am confident that our new cohort of editors will strengthen decision-making and broaden our level of expertise in dealing with the wide range of articles that are submitted to the journal. I would particularly like to mention the new Editors—Daniel Costa (University of California) and Sasha Dall (University of Exeter)—as along with the other Editors they play a particularly important role in determining whether articles are of sufficient quality and novelty for publication and in shaping wider journal strategy. Daniel is a marine biologist who works on the ecology, physiology and conservation of marine animals and Sasha is a mathematical ecologist who conducts research on the behavioural ecology of animals, particularly

birds. Both were valuable and hard-working Associate Editors for the journal and I am pleased that they have agreed to take on this added responsibility. I also want to thank Editor Suzanne Alonso who is retiring at the end of this year for her hard work and commitment to the journal over a total of 7 years as Associate Editor and subsequently Editor.

*Proceedings B* has been recognized for some time as one of the world's premier journals in ecology, evolution and behaviour; however, over the past decade, we have broadened our reach considerably to become perhaps the leading journal in the world in organismal biology. We now publish papers on a much wider range of topics, including health and disease epidemiology, evolutionary medicine, neuroscience and cognition, palaeontology, behaviour genetics, evolutionary development, biomechanics, molecular ecology, comparative biology, biodiversity science and global change biology. We are interested in continuing this process of diversification and receiving papers in all fields of biology. All research papers we publish have to address significant questions, report novel findings and have broad implication for organismal biology. The most common reason for rejection at the pre-review stage is that papers are too specialized in scope and not sufficiently novel. Our requirement for both novelty and generality in *Proceedings B* sets a high bar for publication in the journal and this largely explains why our rejection rates are currently at 86%.

The field of organismal biology is currently experiencing a quiet revolution due to new analytical methods, increased computational power, satellite imagery and a range of new sequencing techniques for probing the genome. These advances have enabled researchers to address previously intractable problems, as well as to formulate new questions and develop new lines of enquiry. We are eager to see submissions of research articles and review proposals to *Proceedings B* in emerging areas spurred by technological advances such as trophic ecology, community phylogenetics, and ecological and evolutionary genomics to name but a few. *Proceedings B* also welcomes interdisciplinary studies and novel syntheses that address outstanding questions in organismal biology and we will continue to publish purely theoretical contributions as long as they are relevant to the biology of real organisms.

6 March 2015 is the 350th anniversary of the first publication of the world's first scientific journal, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. To celebrate this important event *Proceedings B* is preparing specially commissioned content that will hopefully engage our readership and the public at large, including a special feature in the journal on *Evolution and Genetics in Medicine* edited by Professor Sir Roy Anderson FRS and Professor Brian Spratt (both of Imperial College, University of London). More widely the Royal Society is marking the anniversary with a programme of exciting activities acknowledging the contribution of *Philosophical Transactions* to the invention of the scientific method—the journal pioneered the concepts of scientific priority and peer review.

The 350th anniversary is an opportunity to take stock of a rapidly changing publishing landscape and the Royal Society will hold a series of debates on the *Future of Scholarly Scientific Communication*. The celebrations will also recognize the contributions of scientific publishing to science and the modern world through short films and special features and articles. Finally, a special effort will be made to reach out to scientists around the world with an innovative scientific meeting on the theme of 'bioinspiration' that will use the latest web technologies to allow two-way live discussion between participants worldwide.

To coincide with the 350th anniversary, along with other Royal Society journals, we have also recently redesigned the *Proceedings B* website so that it is easier to navigate and content is more prominent. We hope that this will make it easier for people to discover more of the excellent articles that are published in the journal.

I will close by thanking Emilie Aimé for all her help as Publishing Editor for *Proceedings B* over the past year, and in getting me started in my new role. As I write this editorial, Emilie is about to take over as Publishing Editor at *Royal Society Open Science*, the Royal Society's new open access journal and I wish her well in her new position. Emilie will be replaced at *Proceedings B* by Rhiannon Meaden, formerly Publishing Editor at *Biology Letters*, and I look forward to working with her on what is likely to be an exciting new journey for both of us.

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