This has been a very good year for the journal. The impact factor has increased from 5.1 to 6.05, and the journal is now fourth in the ISI category of 'Biology'. Of course impact factor is only one indication of the role or the value of a journal, but it is here an encouraging indication that, despite the increase in capacity to 24 issues each year, we are continuing to attract excellent guest editors and authors.

At the annual meeting of the editorial board, we conducted a SWOT analysis, to consider what aspect of the journal might need attention in the near future, and we have also discussed the general perceptions of the journal with a number of scientists. As a result, two areas on which we are focusing to broaden the reach of the journal, are the balance between different subject areas and the geographical spread of the contributors. Issues focusing on topics related to biochemistry and molecular, cell and developmental biology are showing a steady increase in frequency. This brings this area into more equal balance with the other three areas on which the journal focuses, with a corresponding slight decrease in the representation of organismal biology. Partly by appointments to the Editorial Board, we also aim to bring the geographical provenance of contributors more into line with the global distribution of research activity.

Much of the strength of the journal comes from its publication of the Royal Society Discussion Meetings. These issues are invariably focused on topics of great current interest, and often with great relevance to public policy. Recent examples include our plastic age [1] and new vaccines for global health [2]. We have also been successful in eliciting excellent proposals for the four annual rounds of editorial commissioning, and our current acceptance rate for these stands at 42 per cent. These issues have also been of great interest and have ranged from food security [3] to mammal conservation strategies [4] to military medicine [5]. One article on habitat preference [6] was even awarded the 2011 ‘Wildlife Publications Award—Outstanding Article’.

Finally, it is a great pleasure to highlight the generous and expert support that the journal receives from inside and outside the Royal Society. The members of the Editorial Board are a constant source of expertise, energy and ideas, and their input is vital in the process of commissioning and reviewing each issue. Joanna Bolesworth has done an excellent job in her temporary position as commissioning editor, and we all wish her well in her new position, and are also delighted to welcome back Claire Rawlinson from maternity leave. We look forward to another successful year for the journal.

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REFERENCES