Comments from the departing Editor

Linda Partridge

My term as an Editor comes to an end with the last issue of 2015. I was fortunate to inherit a successful journal from my predecessor, Prof. Georgina Mace, FRS, and I am delighted to be able to pass the editorship into the very capable hands of Prof. John Pickett, FRS. I hope that he will find the journal and its affairs as absorbing as I have done.

*Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* is a special and unusual journal, and it has been a pleasure getting to know and understand the role that it serves for the academic community and the challenges that a journal of this nature faces in today’s publishing environment. I was frequently delighted to hear from colleagues how fond they are of the journal; and the high regard of the scientific community is obvious from the great commitment that we see from our guest editors and authors. Publishing 26 theme issues a year on schedule could not be achieved without this dedication, and I would like to use this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed during the last 5 years.

My main priority during my editorship was to ensure that we continued to grow our coverage and visibility outside our traditionally strong fields of whole-organism biology and neuroscience. While this is a challenging task, and still needs a lot more work, we have published some excellent issues in new areas for us, such as the 2011 issue on the cell cycle, celebrating the appointment of Sir Paul Nurse as President of the Royal Society [1], the 2014 issue on the centrosome [2] and the recent issue on comparative oncology [3], to name just a few. I am confident that the next Editor will be able to use his exceptionally wide interests to continue to explore new areas.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of being the Editor of such a broad scope journal has been in seeing the great range of topics that are submitted as ideas for theme issues. The Editor also plays a part in determining the programme for the flagship scientific meetings that the Royal Society holds every year (as these are automatically published in the journal), which provides an insight into emerging research areas. I personally find that the issues that are published in association with these discussion meetings are fascinating, as they often capture the interactions among experts at the meeting. I personally co-organized a meeting and subsequent issue [4] back in 2010, and found it to be an extremely rewarding process.

We continually try to improve the quality and cohesion of our issues to ensure that each one is a genuine contribution to the establishment, growth or integration of the topic. One aspect that our guest editors and authors appreciate is the hands-on role that we give to our guest editors. They are responsible for planning the issue and inviting the authors, and then handling and making decisions on the papers. While this requires a bigger time commitment than editorial input for theme issues at some other journals, we strongly believe that this model produces much more coherent and carefully constructed issues, and authors appreciate the level of feedback and support that guest editors are able to provide by being integral parts of the research community. In this way, we see our issues as being very much a community project that will benefit a broad range of scientists. I hope that this unique model endures into the future, and that scientists continue to see the appeal of such collaborative projects.

I had the great pleasure to be Editor-in-Chief at the time of the 350th anniversary of *Philosophical Transactions*. This was an opportunity to celebrate the long history of the journal and its role in supporting the science for which the Royal Society is responsible. As part of a wider celebratory programme of events, we produced a special anniversary issue that looked back to some of the key papers published in the journal during the past 350 years [5]. It is a real honour to have been associated with a journal that has published work by the great scientists of the past, such as Leeuwenhoek, Newton, Young and...
Faraday. Unfortunately, we could not cover everything, so we opened this up to the public and also published a great series of blogs from our readers about their favourites from our archives.

The year 2015 also saw the 350th anniversary of the publication of Hooke’s *Micrographia* [6], in which the term ‘cell’ was used for the first time. To celebrate this, the Royal Society held a discussion meeting in October on ‘Cells: from Robert Hooke to cell therapy—a 350 year journey’. We published an associated journal issue [7] in advance of the meeting, in which world leading researchers describe how cells are used in new approaches to treat diseases and outline applications that are now nearing the clinic.

Finally, I would like to thank both the Editorial Board and the Royal Society’s Publishing staff for their efficiency, professionalism and creativity, which has made my job both very enjoyable and productive. My thanks in particular go to Claire Rawlinson and Helen Eaton who have been the Commissioning Editors during my term. It has been a great pleasure to work with both of them and they have been key to the growing success of *Philosophical Transactions B* in recent years.

References


