

Editorial

With this issue of the *Journal of Genetics* a new editorial team takes over the running of the journal. Anuranjan Anand and Amitabh Joshi join as editors. H. Sharat Chandra the outgoing Editor will continue to advise us as a consulting editor and I start as chief editor.

Most of those who have read or heard of the *Journal of Genetics* already know its history. William Bateson and Reginald Punnett founded it in 1910 and J. B. S. Haldane brought the journal with him to India. After Haldane's death, the Indian Academy of Sciences—through the efforts of S. Ramaseshan, Satish Dhawan, Sharat Chandra and Obaid Siddiqi—took over the journal from the Haldane Trust. The *Journal* was thus revived in 1985 with Sharat Chandra as Editor.

The striking changes in the world of scientific publishing have meant that the *Journal* now needs another revival. What future does it have? If you were an optimist you would say that the good news is that it has a great track-record of responding to resuscitation and thus this new attempt will very likely work. Why bother, a realist may retort. And, indeed, why? After all, there are many good journals around, even several specialized ones in genetics. With the composition of its editors and its publisher, is not the journal really an *Indian* journal? In general, publications by academies or societies have a hard time competing in the real world. What chance does a specialized journal published by the Indian Academy of Sciences have? Thus, if one were to commission a market-survey, there would be little doubt what the suggestions will be: close the journal down or get it published by a commercial publisher who will buy and use (or bury) the brand name. Rather fortunately, we cannot afford to have a market-survey commissioned. And, rather fortunately, the very pressures that caused the journal to need another revival are those that offer opportunities for its growth.

I will briefly raise, and try to answer, two questions. First, from the perspective of genetics and geneticists, should we have this journal at all? Second, if the answer to the first question is yes, how does one ensure its survival and growth?

It is true today's world offers a huge choice to the geneticist about where to publish. There are journals of genetics, neurogenetics, behavioural genetics, human genetics, plant genetics, molecular genetics and so on. Yet, there is room for the *Journal of Genetics* because it is already there and has, at least in the eyes of the converted, something of a reputation. But far more important than being alive and having a past is the fact that there are a number of extraordinarily talented and accomplished group of well-wishers of the journal who are willing to put their efforts into the journal. If your editors, and this is a big if, have the drive to harness the energies of this group, the journal will do well and can occupy an important *niche*. What is this *niche*? There is room for a quality genetics journal, which, without sacrificing rigour, publishes both 'standard' papers and those which propose new concepts or are speculative. There is room for a genetics journal, which has analytical articles about the field—reviewing recent papers, ideas and findings—written from a perspective that is not victim to fashion but at the same time one which is not blinkered. There is room for a genetics journal, which, without becoming any less scholarly, is accessible and enjoyed by the student or researcher with a peripheral interest as well as the specialist. That's a rather big *niche*!

So, the answer to the first question is yes: The journal can use its name and its past to be of value. But can it actually accomplish this and, if so, how? One reason we feel that there is a need for another rebirth of the journal is the way publishing is so rapidly changing. The Internet was one revolution, and an already old one. But the spectre that hangs over the 'traditional' scientific-publishing industry is the advent of 'open-access' publishing. This wonderfully simple idea (whose steady-state forms are yet to emerge) promises to make scientific research widely and readily accessible. If the *Journal of Genetics* embraces this theme, if it also becomes web-based, if it published online and rapidly; then there is good reason to believe it will be viable. Thus, the answer to our second question is actually quite simple: we can survive if we embrace and are adept at open-access electronic published in addition to having our print editions. And here, perhaps not so strangely, being based in India and publishing from Bangalore may not be a disadvantage, perhaps the opposite!

We therefore feel that the *Journal* has a future, one that can, and should, more than justify its heritage, it has access to the material resources for securing this future and whether it achieves its goals will depend entirely on the abilities of its editors.

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In this issue of the *Journal of Genetics*, you will see some changes having taken effect and we hope to have the others—particularly our web-edition—in place very soon. We have diversified the types of papers to include research commentaries and short reports in addition to the standard research paper. The instructions to authors detail these and we look forward to seeing much more variety in the journal. We have also introduced a section that reprints, with a research commentary, a ‘classic’ paper from the *Journal of Genetics*. Many wonderful papers that have had a major impact on the field have been published in the journal and we hope examples of these will increase the likelihood of your submitting your papers to us. Finally, we have a new cover that will change with each issue and which will be relevant to a paper in the journal. We hope this new look and its demands will keep us on our toes to speedily keep all the rash promises we have made above! We have kept unchanged our very valuable editorial advisory team. Many of them have asked to rotate out but we would like to have additions and replacements made steadily rather than abruptly. So, while we deal with the hordes of volunteers, I hope we will continue to have the support of the present team.

I should end by saying how fortunate we—the community of geneticists—are that the *Journal of Genetics* is alive. It provides a scientific and cultural link that is non-trivial. We owe the presence of the journal in no small measure to the efforts of Professor H. Sharat Chandra and his colleagues and we would like to acknowledge this deep debt.

The new team seeks your support, and there are two ways of doing this: submit good papers to the journal and help review them!

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