

Editorial

So-long and welcome

Over its eight-decade history, a selection of talented scientists has served as editors with *The Journal of Experimental Biology*. However, in recent years, the journal has expanded enormously to the point where no single individual could manage the peer review load. Currently, a team of nine editors, led by Editor-in-Chief Hans Hoppeler, oversees the JEB. Charlie Ellington and Bob Boutilier initiated the modern-day editorial expansion and one of the Editors, recruited by Bob Boutilier in 1995, was molecular biologist Nathan Nelson. Since joining the journal, Nelson has steered hundreds of papers through peer review but he has finally decided to step down after his 13-year association with the journal to concentrate on his own research and 'let the younger generation take over,' he says.

Nelson's major scientific contributions include cloning neurotransmitter transporters, including the first GABA transporter. He also cloned and characterised the V-ATPase complex. Later, Nelson cloned metal ion transporters and identified their role in the front line of our defence against infectious diseases in macrophages. In more recent years, Nelson has turned to crystallography to solve the molecular structures of membrane proteins, culminating in the publication of the plant photosystem I supercomplex structure at 3.4 Å in *Nature* in 2007.

A talented lab scientist who has always maintained a 'hands on' approach to research, Nelson says 'In all my career I never left the bench'. He loves bench work and says 'my hands are my pride'. At the age of 71, Nelson is still happiest mounting crystals and making his own solutions when many would have retired.

Reflecting on his service with the journal, Nelson says 'it allowed me to keep up-to-date with developments in physiology that I would not have read otherwise'. Nelson also lists the annual symposia organised by the journal among the highlights of his editorship. According to Nelson, these meetings introduced him to research areas outside of his own field, which he would not have encountered otherwise. He directly shaped meetings on his own areas of expertise, including the meeting on V-ATPases in 1994 and the recent 2008 meeting on transporters held in Chateau Montebello, Quebec. Most importantly, Nelson has greatly enjoyed his interactions with the journal's editorial team and says 'working with them has been a pleasure'.

While Nelson steps down after a lengthy association with the journal, we are delighted to welcome Michael Dickinson to the team of Editors. Dickinson, who takes a broad multidisciplinary approach

in his own work, is already a loyal JEB author, having published over 30 papers in the journal since 1987. He joins us at a time when the areas in which he specialises, biomechanics and neuroethology, are particularly strong.

Having worked with John Palka on axon pathfinding and sensory physiology in *Drosophila* imaginal discs for his PhD, Dickinson then moved to a postdoc in membrane biophysics at the Roche Institute of Molecular Biology. However, after looking at synaptic plasticity in long-term depression, Dickinson decided not to pursue a career in mainstream neuroscience and instead joined Karl Götz at the Max Planck Institut für Biologische Kybernetik in Tübingen, where he started making models of insect wings and became interested in the aerodynamics of insect flight.

After an intense five months in Götz's lab, Dickinson returned to the USA to set up his own lab in Chicago. He says 'I was convinced that the interesting way to build my lab was to run the whole gambit from neuroscience to biomechanics'. This integrative approach has formed the core of Dickinson's scientific philosophy for the last 17 years as he has systematically dissected the aerodynamics and neuroethology of insect flight from the perspective of *Drosophila*. Dickinson's ultimate goal is to follow sensory information gathered by the insect as it is processed by the brain, which then sends signals to flight muscles in order to move the wings, which in turn generate the aerodynamic forces that keep the insect aloft, resulting in a measurable behaviour.

Dickinson admits that he was honoured when first approached to join the journal. Although he was initially prevented from accepting the invitation by other commitments, he was delighted when Hans

Hoppeler re-extended the invitation more recently. 'JEB has been good to me from early on' says Dickinson, remembering his earliest papers on leech neurobiology published as an undergraduate. Looking to the future, Dickinson says that he is 'looking forward to having the opportunity to edit manuscripts across the whole spectrum of biology', indulging his passions for neurobiology, biomechanics and muscle physiology and adds that 'the JEB is one of the few journals that has such breadth'.



Nathan Nelson leaves the JEB after 13 years



Michael Dickinson joins the JEB in February 2009

Kathryn Knight, News and Views Editor
Hans Hoppeler, Editor-in-Chief