

Happy New Year from JEM!

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Walking the walk

During the past three years, corresponding to the tenure of the current Chairman of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Environmental Monitoring*, editorials have consistently addressed the breadth and depth of the subject area covered by the journal. These have been part of our campaign to define the environment fully in terms of the complex system that it is, to promote recognition of its interdisciplinary nature, and so to identify the place of the journal as a leader in the whole range of the environmental sciences. So we have defined both the environment, and the agents contained within it, in the widest possible terms, going far beyond the definition of a single disciplinary area (e.g., chemistry)—to the extent, even, of embracing disciplines beyond the natural sciences that are ‘bread-and-butter’ to most of our readers. The environment and the reasons for our continued interest in it drive ever new and increasingly multifaceted ways of addressing them. To this end, JEM publishes several contrasting types of contribution, including environmental news columns (e.g., legislative issues, environmental quality assessment and control, chemical hazards and public and occupational health), Focus Articles on ‘hot topics’ (e.g., drugs as environmental contaminants), Perspective columns on specific areas of ongoing current interest (e.g., pesticides and metals) and critical reviews. But, of course, the primary, ‘flagship’ contributions that ultimately define the reputation of the journal are its scientific articles, rigorously selected by expert peer-review from the large number of unsolicited contributions that are submitted. In 2003, 143 such articles were published, 125 in 2004 and approximately 160 in 2005. These have described studies of environmental media such as air, water, soil and food, as well as combinations of these. They have encompassed chemical, physical and biological agents and factors. They have contained wide-ranging discussions

of both ‘big picture’ scenarios (e.g., climate change) and detailed elaborations of specific environmental situations. They have included descriptions of measurement methods and protocols and of actual data. They have also included both laboratory and field investigations. This matrix of topics defies any simple classification. But what has emerged from the lists of contents of JEM issues during the past three years—indeed, from the very beginning of the life of the journal—is a rich fabric of important new knowledge about the environment, reflecting large steps towards the achievement of the vision that we have been promoting for JEM. Early on, the Editorial Board had decided that papers would be published only if they represented advances in the state of scientific knowledge about the environment. JEM would not become an archive for published material that is of local interest only, incapable of being interpreted in terms of its importance to the wider body of scientific knowledge about environmental processes. In that way, JEM would become known for the quality of its science and its contribution to scientific thought about the environment.

The Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), although being a learned body with its roots firmly within one particular scientific discipline, has supported this vision from the outset. It has continued to acknowledge that the proper study of environmental processes and impacts requires reaching out to, and engaging with, all the other disciplines that may be relevant. In 2003, to mark the fifth anniversary of the birth of JEM, the RSC commissioned a rigorous review of its progress, with respect to its initial goals as well as its emerging new ones. The Society now regularly reviews its journals, ensuring that its publications remain academically and socially relevant and that the highest quality is maintained. In its report to the RSC about JEM, the Review Panel was supportive of the goals set for JEM and encouraged its continued development along the lines

indicated, whilst noting the need for continued vigilance to maintain—indeed, to increase—the quality of its published works.

All that has been said leads to the suggestion that the ideal typical reader of JEM, one that opens its pages and reads it from cover to cover, must be a true polymath. He/she should be conversant with all the areas addressed, or at the very least be curious about them. Of course, there are very few such individuals. Sadly, this Chairman—a physicist converted long ago into an environmental health scientist—is not quite in their ranks! But can old dogs learn new tricks? More generally, it has always been a natural tendency for individuals in all fields of human endeavour to cling to, or revert back to, their ‘roots’ and hence to their original disciplinary areas. This is equally true of scientists where the argument is often used that “breadth is associated with lack of depth”. We firmly believe that this has not been the case for the material published in JEM. But we do accept this is a continuing challenge as we strive towards further development. Our high standards and continued progress will be maintained so long as there is a strong Editorial Board and a vigilant, but sympathetic, Society. Of course, with the emergence of strong and respectable programs at academic institutions in the environmental sciences and environmental health sciences, the task is now easier than it might have been a couple of decades ago. Now there is a growing community of environmental scientists that can read and talk convincingly at the multiple interdisciplinary boundaries that JEM has defined. This is where the future lies for true progress in the difficult areas that need to be addressed. Indeed, it is no hyperbole to say that the future of the planet is at stake. It is the ultimate goal, therefore, that JEM will become a—perhaps *the*—prime player in this arena. In establishing, maintaining and developing the philosophy for JEM towards bringing us to that point, we have long ‘talked-the-

talk'. Now it is hoped that we have demonstrated that we are 'walking-the-walk'.

The RSC is strict in its policy that the Editorial Boards of its journals must turn over regularly so that the new blood continues to be drawn into the fold. That of course includes chairpersons. The time has come, therefore, for this Chairman to move over and make way for that new blood. My term as Chair has passed very quickly, not entirely without incident, always interesting and challenging, and always enjoyable. It has been a privilege to work with a body as august as the RSC. Above all, it has been a pleasure to work with the outstanding body of professional editors and production staff that actually do the real work and get things done. My thanks to them all, and my good wishes to my successor.

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RSC technology advances rapidly

2005 has seen RSC Publishing invest significantly in technological developments across all of its products. First there was the introduction of the new website in the summer which included a contemporary, fresh look and an enhanced structure for improved and intuitive navigation between relevant, associated content. The improvements to the technological infrastructure have made the site more flexible and efficient, and better equip the RSC to deliver enhanced publishing products and services for its customers in the future. The new look was just the start and towards the end of the year we were pleased to provide further enhancements in the form of RSS feeds and 'forward linking' facilities.

RSS feeds

RSS, or 'really simple syndication', is the latest way to keep up with the research

published by the RSC. The new service provides subscribers with alerts as soon as an Advance Article is published in their journal of choice. Journal readers simply need to go to the journal homepage, click on the RSS link, and follow the step-by-step instructions to register for these enhanced alerts. RSS feeds include both the graphical abstract and text from a journal's contents page—i.e. they deliver access to new research straight to a reader's PC, as soon as it is published! Many feed reader software packages also have the added benefit of remembering what has been read previously, which in turn makes tracking and managing journal browsing more efficient.

Forward linking

'Forward linking', the reverse of reference linking, enables readers to link from any RSC published paper to the articles in which it is cited. In essence, it allows researchers to easily track the progression of a concept or discovery, since its original publication. With one click of a button (on the 'search for citing articles' link) a list of citing articles included in Cross-Ref is presented, complete with DOI links.

At a time when research is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary in nature and the amount of published works continues to grow, it is hoped that the new technology, developed in conjunction with Cross-Ref, will significantly reduce the time spent by researchers searching for information.

These developments demonstrate the investment in publishing products and services over the past year and 2006 will see us enhancing our products further, with improvements to the HTML functionality of all journals and ReSource (the author and referee web interface) already underway.

Impact factors

The 2004 impact factors, released by ISI® in June 2005, showed an impressive

average increase of over 10% for RSC journals.

Calculated annually, ISI® impact factors provide an indication of the quality of a journal—they take into account the number of citations in a given year for all the citeable documents published within a journal in the preceding two years. It is worth noting that alongside the ACS Publications, journals from RSC Publishing have the highest median impact factor among publishers in the chemical sciences. This encouraging statistic demonstrates the recognition and status that researchers place in society published work.

Biology virtual journal

Chemical biology content published in this journal is highlighted in the *Chemical Biology Virtual Journal*. The portal, which was launched in 2002 in recognition of the significant amount of chemical biology material published across RSC journals, enables interested readers to readily access relevant items. All chemical biology articles and related papers published in RSC journals are drawn together online every two weeks, with a selection of the primary literature free to access for a month.

Not just journals

As well as an impressive portfolio of prestigious journals, the RSC has a significant collection of book titles. The first titles in three new series, *RSC Biomolecular Sciences*, *RSC Nanoscience & Nanotechnology Series* and *Issues in Toxicology*, were published in 2005, with further titles due during 2006. Future growth in the books publishing programme is planned, which reflects the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of the chemical sciences.

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