

Provoking progress: a new chapter

Vivian Siegel, Founding Editor-in-Chief

Summary

Journals do more than publish collections of research articles and reviews; they also create community, influence standards for community behavior and 'provoke progress' in a particular field. In this Editorial, founding Editor-in-Chief Vivian Siegel compares launching a journal to raising a child, and reflects on the choices and successes of her tenure at DMM as she passes the leadership of the journal to new editors.

Launching DMM, and letting it go

Launching a journal is a bit like raising a child. Even more than a child, a journal is unformed when you begin, and grows and develops a 'personality' based on the decisions you make for it and the effort you put into it – which for a journal translates into the look and feel of the journal, the type and quality of the articles it publishes, and its editorial and publishing policies.

When DMM launched in 2008, I wrote an editorial entitled *Provoking progress* (Siegel, 2008). In this piece, I voiced my excitement and hope for the research that DMM would publish and for the community of basic researchers and clinical scientists who would meet between its covers to accelerate our progress towards understanding, diagnosing and treating human disease.

Together, the editorial team, advisory group and I defined the scope of the journal: first, research articles using (any) model organism to study (any) human disease; we later expanded this to include *in vitro* disease models. We also set a high standard for 'translational impact' – it isn't enough to give lip service to disease; the research has to move us forward towards understanding disease mechanisms or developing new diagnoses or therapies. In addition to research articles, we also introduced 'resource' articles, which report new and useful resources and methods. Finally, we strove to create a fair and transparent editorial practice, in which we set high standards without asking authors to do needless or endless work.

We also created a rich 'front section' to the journal. More than just the occasional review and editorial, this area features a number of different kinds of articles aimed at spurring new research and inspiring the next generation of scientists. These include 'Clinical

Puzzles', in which clinicians identify a disease that would benefit from basic science research; 'A Model for Life' interviews with scientists and clinicians who sustain stellar careers and lead exemplary lives; 'At a Glance' poster articles that double as handy lab references; and 'Special Articles', which cover a wide range of issues, such as the recommended procedures for describing and performing metabolic assays of glucose homeostasis in mice (Ayala et al., 2010), the evolution of human obesity (Wells, 2012), or suggestions for optimizing the value of preclinical models (Katz et al., 2012). Over the past few years, DMM has also nurtured young scientists through Journal Club articles and research presentation grants.

Importantly, the journal is open access, so everyone who wishes can read and use the articles immediately upon publication. For those of you in the know about the kinds of Creative Commons licenses offered, I will note that we recently decided to move from the CC-NC-SA license, which prevents commercial re-use and requires any further distributions of the article to use the same Creative Commons license, to the less restrictive CC-BY license, which requires attribution only. As always, the journal is committed to publishing policies that best serve our community.

When I look back on those decisions for DMM, I am pleased: the quality of the articles is high and the look of the journal matches it; and there are interesting ways for basic researchers and clinical researchers to interact with and inform each other. Of course, these successes are not mine alone: we had enormous support in our efforts from The Company of Biologists itself, from the journal advisory group, from the editorial team, and from the many researchers who submitted to, reviewed for and published in DMM.

About a year and a half ago, I agreed to become the Director of Scientific Education and Public Communications at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, and realized I would have limited time to devote to DMM, too little to give it what it needs to continue to grow. I encouraged The Company of Biologists to identify academic editors instead of another professional editor to succeed me, as I felt that the journal had now reached an age where its lead editors should be researchers actively engaged in the work covered by the journal. With the help of an old friend and colleague, Judith Glaven, and the DMM advisory group, we gathered feedback on the journal and suggestions for possible lead editors, ultimately arriving at Ross Cagan as the new Editor-in-Chief, and Monica Justice and George Tidmarsh as Senior Editors. They began leading DMM at the beginning of the year.

The process was thoughtful, but not quick; and so to help me with the transition, the advisory group stepped in as editors for new submissions starting in December of last year. For that I am



Photo of Vivian Siegel, courtesy of Maria Nemchuk at the Broad Institute.

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very grateful. I continue to handle the papers that began with me. But I no longer have a sense of the daily flow of the journal, since I can only see those papers I have been handling – which I have to admit feels a little strange, and which brings me to my last point.

If launching a journal is like raising a child, then passing that journal along to new editors is like being at your child's wedding. I watch with pride at what the journal has become, with enormous respect for the new editors, and with hope for how the journal will develop under new leadership. Ross, Monica and George are just the right team to guide the next phase of the journal's growth. They describe their vision for the journal – a vision that I fully support – in their introductory Editorial (Cagan et al., 2013).

Like a mother, I miss my daily involvement with DMM. Like a mother, my attachment to the journal feels permanent. And like a

mother, I know that the time is right, and that the new editors will spur the journal in all sorts of exciting ways.

Mazel tov.

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