

THE JOURNALS - 1976

The Journals of the American Physiological Society are its pride. Ever since the first days of the American Journal of Physiology, it has stood as a towering paradigm of excellence in scientific communication. No library that caters to physiologists, biologists, or physicians can do without it. No account of the present state of scientific reporting can ignore it.

This continued preeminence over the years was no mean accomplishment since physiology continued to change and there was always the unremitting challenge for the publications of the Society to remain responsive to the shifting interests of its membership. Alert publications committees resorted to different strategies to keep apace. Memberships on editorial boards were continually reexamined and modified. New sections appeared in the American Journal of Physiology. When reshuffling and repackaging no longer sufficed, new journals appeared. The Journal of Applied Physiology represented at least one large constituency that the American Journal of Physiology could no longer accommodate; the Journal of Neurophysiology another.

Each generation of publication committees was sensitive to the challenge of matching the journals to the changing times. But, by the 1960's, the problem was formidable. Specialization and fractionation in physiology had reached a new peak. The ranks of the generalist in physiology had grown thinner and thinner. A host of new specialty journals, many headed by members of the American Physiological Society, had appeared as competitors for the journals of the Society. Although the dedicated efforts of the section editors and of reviewers had managed to keep the journals of the Society in the forefront, it seemed clear that a new mechanism had to be established by which the journals of the Society would surge into the lead again, not only in covering the broad perspectives of physiology, but also in coping with the specialized needs of smaller constituencies within the Society.

Taking as a boundary condition the unremitting commitment of the journals to excellence, the question that had to be dealt with was how to satisfy the needs of both the generalist and of the specialist in physiology. After many months of discussion and consultation, a solution emerged. It is now beginning to be implemented. It includes the following elements:

1. The American Journal of Physiology and the Journal of Applied Physiology will continue to exist and to be available as such. This continuing arrangement will satisfy both the generalist in physiology and the librarian who will be able to preserve unbroken series of these two distinguished journals.
2. The Journal of Applied Physiology, under its own editorial board, will restrict itself to papers in respiration, exercise, and environmental physiology.

3. The American Journal of Physiology will include five separate journals, each under its own editorial board and each with well defined subject matter. Each of these components will be available separately. This arrangement will satisfy the specialist who is interested in having on hand outstanding papers in his own particular field of interest.

In practice, each editorial board will be encouraged to exercise editorial individuality and ingenuity. The review process will retain its essential features but editors will be given license to develop mechanisms for review that will expedite the handling of papers without sacrificing quality. The Publications Committee will retain its prerogatives in coordinating the overall activities of the journals and in assuring both quality and responsiveness to the needs of the Society.

In the process of restructuring the journals, two new journals have emerged: Cell (and Membrane) Physiology and Integrative and Regulatory (as well as Comparative) Physiology. These are new directions that need coverage in our journals. Together with the Journal of Neurophysiology, the total sweep of the journals is now exceedingly broad. When viewed in conjunction with Physiological Reviews and the Handbooks of Physiology, the publications of the Society now provide the broadest coverage of physiology in the world.

The individual subscriber may well wonder about how these changes will affect his pocketbook. For those who continue to purchase the American Journal of Physiology and the Journal of Applied Physiology, the price is approximately the same at \$210 per year. If, in addition or instead, the subscriber elects to subscribe to one of the specialty journals that comprise the American Journal of Physiology, the price will prove to be no more than that of the corresponding specialty journal published by others. Indeed, in many instances, it will be far less, particularly to members of the Society who may purchase the journals at half price.

To top it all off, the American Journal of Physiology, the Journal of Applied Physiology and the five component journals of the American Journal of Physiology will all undergo a face-lift. New and attractive covers will express the new individualities of the seven journals. However, the format, the print, and the illustrations, which have been so long in developing to their present level of legibility and attractiveness, will be retained.

These revisions are the products of many years of exploration and deliberation. The new venture seems to provide the exhilarating prospect of retaining the best of the old while opening new doors for cultivation and presentation of the new. As this venture moves ahead, the Publications Committee would welcome the comments and advice of the members of the Society.

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