

## Farewell from the Editor

PATRICIO ZAPATA

Editor, Biological Research.  
Laboratory of Neurobiology, Catholic University of Chile, Santiago, Chile.

When I was approached by the then President of the Society of Biology of Chile, Prof Esteban Rodríguez, in March 1992, and offered the position of Chief Editor of this journal, I foresaw a great responsibility ahead. And this was true. The position was intended for a 6-year term, but it was prolonged for an additional year.

This journal had been founded in 1964 under the name "*Archivos de Biología y Medicina Experimentales*", with the intention to serve as a means of diffusion of the scientific work performed by the members of the Society of Biology of Chile, although open to contributions from foreign scientists as well. It was decided then that the journal would be published in Spanish, but in the following years an increasing number of papers was also published in English.

By 1992, the Chilean community of biologists believed that the time had come to publish all articles in English, to reach a wider audience and impact. Therefore, I received the responsibility of publishing the journal entirely in English and my first task was to propose a new name in that language. After some search and to my surprise, I found out that the name "**Biological Research**" had not been used for past and current scientific journals worldwide. It had the advantage of encompassing different fields of the biological sciences, including experimental medicine, and thus preserving the scope of the publication. I suggested such a name, which was approved by the Council of the Society of Biology of Chile.

Publishing all articles in English has been an imposing challenge, faced first by authors and then by the editorial office. But we have learnt very much from such task,

especially the editorial staff and we are grateful for that.

During our editorial term, voices have risen asking about the purpose of editing in Chile a scientific journal in English. Why not submit all our papers to foreign journals written in English? The answer is that a national scientific community –when achieving maturity– has not only the responsibility of reaching the widest possible audience for its publications (in our days by publishing in English), but also to provide a means for producing such publications. Years ago, the national pride was conceived in terms of publishing only in the native tongue, but this was contrary to the ideal of science as a human enterprise without borders. A national scientific community which is nurtured only from within and communicates only with itself is an autistic citizenry, and thus devoided of the possibility of growing up. National pride must be understood nowadays as having the means to serve the international community. The French, the Germans and the Japanese –among others– have decided not only to offer the technology of their cars to the entire world, but also to provide part of their scientific production in English to the international scientific community, by editing journals in English within their respective countries. It seems clear that such enterprise is not the result of underdevelopment but of a well attained maturity.

The high standards and hard work exhibited by my predecessors in this job –Professors Jorge Mardones and Tito Ureta– established levels difficult to maintain, but they were also exemplary for my task.

Serving as an editor of this journal has been a very demanding and sometimes exhausting occupation. But I have enjoyed

this work and satisfaction is derived from a job placed at the front line where scientific research is turned into scientific publications, where the editor may provide some help to authors to cross that line. Serving as an editor of **Biological Research** has been an excellent opportunity to learn, first from the authors whose articles have been published in this journal, and then from the editing process itself.

The success of a scientific journal rests entirely on the quality of papers submitted by authors. Submitting manuscripts of good quality to a nationally based journal –instead of a well reputed foreign journal– is a crucial decision only moved by generosity, but the only way to enhance the scientific level of the journal, as well as the image of the country or the region. The collaborations received from scientists of other Latin American countries may well turn this journal into a representation of the biological research performed in the region.

At the end of my term as Editor of **Biological Research**, I must express my gratitude:

- to the authors of manuscripts who have submitted their work to the consideration of our Editorial Board, and graciously accepted criticisms and suggestions intended to improve the quality of the papers;

- to the members of the Editorial Board, who have provided sound advice and

valuable suggestions to both the authors and this Editor;

- to the referees who accepted to review the papers, giving anonymous criticisms to the authors and judicious comments to the Editor in terms of acceptance or rejection of the papers;

- to the guest editors of some special issues devoted to single topics, who selected and invited the prospective authors, collected their papers and refereed most of them;

- to the production managers of *Alfabetas Artes Gráficas*, for their effort to print this journal in a foreign language and for the neatness of their work;

- to the Past-Presidents of the Society of Biology of Chile, who encouraged and gave strong support to the Editor's labours;

- last but not least, to the Assistant Editor, without whom this editorial task should have been unsurmountable. She managed the daily business of the Editorial Office, made corrections and suggestions on the proper wording of the papers, translated some documents from Spanish to English, and assumed a large part of the tedious editing of printing proofs. She turned into reality what was only a possibility, and sometimes even what was apparently impossible.

Thus, many thanks and best wishes to all those who have collaborated with **Biological Research**.