

Editorial

IJDB Volume 50 ***Golden Anniversary***

In today's scientific world, which abounds with a plethora of research journals, it is rare to find one which can boast of over 50 years of publishing experience and which, on top of that, continues to excel, amid changes in scope, style and even name, by continually rising to the constant challenges imposed by rapidly changing circumstances. This is something which we hope to have achieved over the last 50 years and which we leave up to the kind reader to evaluate independently on the basis of the following summary of our history, achievements and strategy for the future.

This journal began in 1952 as ***Anales de Anatomía*** (Annals of Anatomy), with an initial focus mainly on Neuroanatomy, under the editorship of José Escolar from the University of Granada (Spain). However, in 1960, in its eighth volume, the latter was transformed under the new editorship of Miguel Guirao, also at the University of Granada, into a different and renovated journal. It changed its name to that of ***Anales del Desarrollo*** (Annals of Development), focusing on the then modern science which became known as Developmental Biology. This new approach was at that moment very timely, since the North American journal *Developmental Biology* has only begun to be published a year earlier and the British *Journal of Embryology and Experimental Morphology*, known today as *Development* had been out for only thirteen years. On the international scene, there were still few journals in this area, with the exception of the old German journal founded by Wilhelm Roux in 1894 *Archiv für Entwicklungsmechanik der Organismen*, which today bears the name *Development, Genes and Evolution*, the Japanese journal *Embryologia* (currently *Development, Growth and Differentiation*) and a few others of more general scope, such as the *Journal of Experimental Zoology*, in which articles on Experimental Embryology frequently appeared. Finally, in 1989, which was a year marked by sociological and political changes and events all over the world, the journal began its most recent process of remodeling, and started to be published under its current name ***The International Journal of Developmental Biology***. Its inaugural issue was dedicated to the then late Prof. Sulo Toivonen from the University of Helsinki (Finland) and to the prestigious Finnish school of Developmental Biology.

Over the past seventeen years, we have guided our decisions and activities in the light of the following fundamental principles: publishing quality science *for* and *by* scientists, in a not-for-profit manner, consolidating the multidisciplinary character of Developmental Biology and aiming to be authentically international in our Editorial Board, scope and purpose, with a view to stimulating interaction between researchers and scientific societies all over the world. One of the most original and distinguishing characteristics of the journal are its *Special Issues*, which are enthusiastically received by our readers. Many other prestigious journals are now following suit, publishing similar "Focus" issues. The objective of our *Special Issues* is in the first place, to bring to light the history, traditions and current style of the practice of Developmental Biology in different countries. Thus, in addition to the first one dedicated to Finland, we have published others on France, the former Yugoslavia (courageously edited by the late Prof. Anton Svajger from Zagreb, in difficult circumstances of the then civil war which ravaged this beautiful country in 1991), Belgium, Japan, Germany, Sweden, Russia, Britain, Italy, Switzerland and more recently, Australia & New Zealand. We have also published thematic issues centered on research centers of renowned prestige and tradition in Developmental Biology research (the Hubrecht Laboratory in Utrecht, The Netherlands and the Nogent Institute, on the outskirts of Paris, France). We have also covered hot topics of timely interest related to biological models (Urodeles, Drosophila, Mammals, Plants), organogenesis (Odontogenesis, Nefrogenesis, Skin, Eye, Limb) and other more specific themes, such as experimental techniques (Development *in vitro*, Transgenesis), Cancer (Developmental Aspects of Neoplasia, Invasion in Cancer and Embryonic Development), conceptual and historic themes (The Spemann-Mangold Organizer), teaching (Teaching Developmental Biology) or theoretical biology (Developmental Morphodynamics). These issues have been in many cases tributes to the great pioneers of the discipline and they are full of both surprising and inspiring interviews with prestigious scientists. Our regular issues contain papers from all over the world in the form of Reviews, Original Articles, Short Communications, Developmental Expression Patterns, Technical Reports, Developmental Stages Series, Historical Studies, Theoretical Papers, Interviews, etc.

However, it is mainly in recent years when we have experienced the most profound throes and challenges of the era of the new technologies of information and communication. Even the very best international scientific publications, which only a few years ago were published exclusively in paper format, nowadays appear as dynamic digital publications on *Internet*, with added services such as *Online Submission, Manuscript Tracking, Citation Alerts, Literature Awareness*, etc. More importantly, the digital version of scientific journals is usually published online a few months before the corresponding publication appears in paper, and arrives immediately via *Internet* to researchers all over the world. All of these advantages, which are the fruitful and welcomed result of massive investments on behalf of the giant multinational publishers are serving to widen the competitive rift between these giant monopolies and the small, independent publishers, usually run by universities or scientific societies, since these do not dispose of the capital necessary to make such investments. A titanic struggle is required on behalf of the small, independent, scholarly publishers, to urgently and continually adapt to the new world of scientific communication; our journal has no intention of lagging behind. Our mission to be among the elite of science publications rests on the quality of our human resources (our Editorial Team), the application and development of new publishing technologies and the preservation of more traditional qualities of efficient and personalized attention to all of our authors, subscribers and readers. Indeed, this is perhaps our most competitive advantage, that being independent and not focused on profit, we can attend to all our authors and subscribers in a personalized manner, and adapt rapidly to changing circumstances. Our strategy is thus to continue to pursue excellence, to become a monthly publication, to improve the functionality and services associated with our digital edition and our Web, dedicating more space to currently "hot" themes, such as embryonic stem cell research and to continue to promote free access to our contents by institutions in developing countries.

Nevertheless, all of this is quite impossible without the perspicacity and vision for opportunity of a number of "*Journal Angels*" who provided financial sponsorship for this project, giving us precious time to consolidate the journal's economic viability, rather than demanding immediate or short term returns. We are deeply indebted to those who have faithfully supported us at the University of the Basque Country Editorial Service (UBC Press), the Basque Government and the Carlos III Institute of the Spanish Ministry of Health. This support has allowed us to focus on the science, rather than on searing market pressures and enabled us to elaborate an original journal, which continues to be independent from the large multinational editorial monopolies. And finally, I wish to sincerely acknowledge the untiring support of our Associate Editors, the members of our Editorial Advisory Board, our authors, referees, subscribers and all our readers. Without this continuing personal enthusiasm, together with constructive criticisms and suggestions, it will be impossible to achieve our ambitious aims. On the happy occasion of this Golden Anniversary, I want to personally express my most sincere thanks to you all for your vital, constant and deeply appreciated contribution. Keep up the good work!

Juan Aréchaga
Editor-in-Chief

Leioa, December 2005