

The Society's Publications

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6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3 the post-War developments in the Society were described but publications were deliberately left for consideration in a separate chapter. It is obvious from the early History of the Society that the acquisition of the *Biochemical Journal* in 1912 and its development into a leading international outlet for biochemical papers had by 1944 set the Society on a reasonably firm financial foundation (see Chapter 4) on which the present impressive edifice has been built. Although, as will become clear later in the chapter, periods of friction sometimes occurred between the General Committee and the Editorial Board, the general impression is that of an efficiently run journal whose Editors have reacted responsibly to the real difficulties which have been thrown up by the General Committee.

Although the *Biochemical Journal* is the flagship of the Society's publication fleet, it is extremely well supported by *Transactions*, which turned out to be the very opposite of the destroyer predicted by some conservative members of the Society. Indeed in its own sphere it has quickly developed in a way of which the Society can be justly proud. *Clinical Science* is a successful joint venture with the Medical Research Society. *Essays in Biochemistry* made its mark some 20 years ago as an annual publication and the series *Biochemical Society*

Symposia is also well established. Not all the publishing ventures have been successful; *Essays in Medical Biochemistry* closed after four volumes and *Bioscience Reports* has survived by being transferred to a commercial publisher. Also, occasionally opportunities have been lost. All these topics will be enlarged upon as the chapter progresses.

6.2 The *Biochemical Journal* 1945–1965

The retirement of Arthur Harden in 1937 as Editor after 25 years was clearly the end of an era (Chapter 2) but the Society was lucky in that C. R. (afterwards Sir Charles) Harington (Fig. 2.7), who had been Harden's assistant for seven years, accepted the invitation to fill Harden's post and served as senior Editor until 1942. During this period he was helped by three associate Editors, S. J. Cowell, F. Dickens (Plate 1A) and F. J. W. Roughton.

Harington, when he resigned on being appointed Director of the National Institute for Medical Research, recorded his views on this period in Morton's *History*[1]:

"As it happened I welcomed the invitation, little realizing what I was letting myself in for, because at that particular juncture I had no serious responsibilities outside my own research and I was anxious for a task that required a different type of effort; this I certainly got. I had had, of course, no previous experience of editorial work and my appointment was an indication of the somewhat light-hearted view that the Committee at that time took of the duties required of the editors of the *Journal*. I am sure that the very thought of a professional editor would have filled them with horror.

"By the time I joined Harden he had trained himself to be an excellent editor. He possessed an equable temperament, could work rapidly with economy of effort and was an admirable colleague for whom I had a great respect, which increased as time went on. I soon learnt, however, that he expected his co-editor to possess the same capacity for getting through the work as he himself had acquired; no sooner had I been appointed than he told me that he had arranged his summer holiday for certain dates which would mean that he would have to leave me to prepare the next number of the *Journal* for press by myself. I neither relished the prospect, which was somewhat alarming, nor enjoyed the performance — especially as this involved the almost complete re-writing of one of the papers — but there is no doubt that this drastic introduction did give me a measure of confidence (perhaps too much) and taught me in three weeks of hard work what I might otherwise have taken a long time to learn.

"In the early and amateurish period of which I am writing, editorial practice was admittedly dictatorial. We did not expect our decisions to be questioned, nor did this often happen. We made little or no use of external referees, trusting our own judgement even in fields in which we could not really claim to be expert. The simplicity of the arrangements had the great advantage of avoiding

delay and we took pride in being able to offer a speed of publication which I believe compared favourably with that of any other scientific journal of comparable standing. In this we were greatly helped by the speed and efficiency of our publishers, the Cambridge University Press. On the other hand, the lack of any assistance apart from minimal secretarial help did place a considerable burden of routine work on the editors; for example, we read all proofs ourselves, both galley and page, and from this task there could be no let-up during holidays or at any other time, if our reputation for prompt publication were to be maintained.

"Scientifically we undoubtedly took risks in relying so completely on our own judgement, and I am sure that we must have made mistakes. Indeed, I remember two scrapes that I got into myself, one of which caused the resignation from the membership of the Society of a senior continental professor who took exception to an editorial alteration that I had made to one of his papers (fortunately he later returned to the fold); the other occurred when I referred back a paper by a senior biochemist in this country, and as a result had the whole of his department up in arms against me; here again, as it turned out, personal relationships were not permanently impaired.

"Nevertheless, incidents of this kind were warnings of the more serious results that might ensue from editorial misjudgement, and at the same time the likelihood of such misjudgement was rapidly increasing owing to the rising flow of papers for publication and the broadening of the subject matter. For this reason Harden and I persuaded the Committee to allow us to recruit more editorial colleagues. We naturally sought for men who were expert in the fields with which we ourselves were less familiar and we were fortunate in obtaining the help first of all of F. J. W. Roughton to deal with papers involving physics and physical chemistry and later of S. J. Cowell and Frank Dickens to cover the fields of nutrition and of cellular biochemistry respectively.

"With these accessions we were able to carry on reasonably well for a few more years, but there still remained the problems of proof-reading and indexing with which we had no assistance and which were becoming more burdensome with the continuing increase in the flow of material. In 1942 I was appointed Director of the National Institute for Medical Research and had perforce to give up my editorship; this afforded the opportunity for the Committee to consider how they wished the *Journal* to be conducted in the future. The decision was made to appoint an enlarged editorial board, and at the same time to introduce certain changes of policy, among which the most important was the use of external referees to help in the assessment of papers for publication as a matter of routine rather than as a procedure reserved for specially difficult cases.

"These changes were the beginning of the development of the substantial organization that the Society now employs for the production of the *Journal*. The changes were inevitable and were probably overdue. They did, however, come in time to enable the *Journal* to keep pace with the enormous increase in biochemical research that has occurred during the past twenty-five years and to strengthen its position as one of the leading scientific journals of the world. That this should be the outcome is a more than

adequate reward to those members of the Society who did their best to maintain the standards of the *Journal* so long as the task remained within the scope of amateurs."

The overall statistics indicating the growth of the *Journal* from 1906 (under the control of Benjamin Moore 1906-1912) until the end of Harington's term of office are given in Fig. 6.1, where the numbers of papers published are recorded. The number of pages published has also increased proportionately but are not recorded because occasional changes in format does not allow direct comparison over the whole period under consideration. With the exception of the period of the Second World War there has been a steady increase in the number of papers published.

During 1945-1965, when the size and print number of the *Journal* increased considerably, the perennial problems associated with publishing an expanding *Journal* arose: the difficulty of costing because of the unpredictable size of each volume, the problem of setting an appropriate level for non-members' subscriptions and the difficulty of obtaining the agreement of the membership to increase their fees. The large profit apparently made by the printer and publisher [the

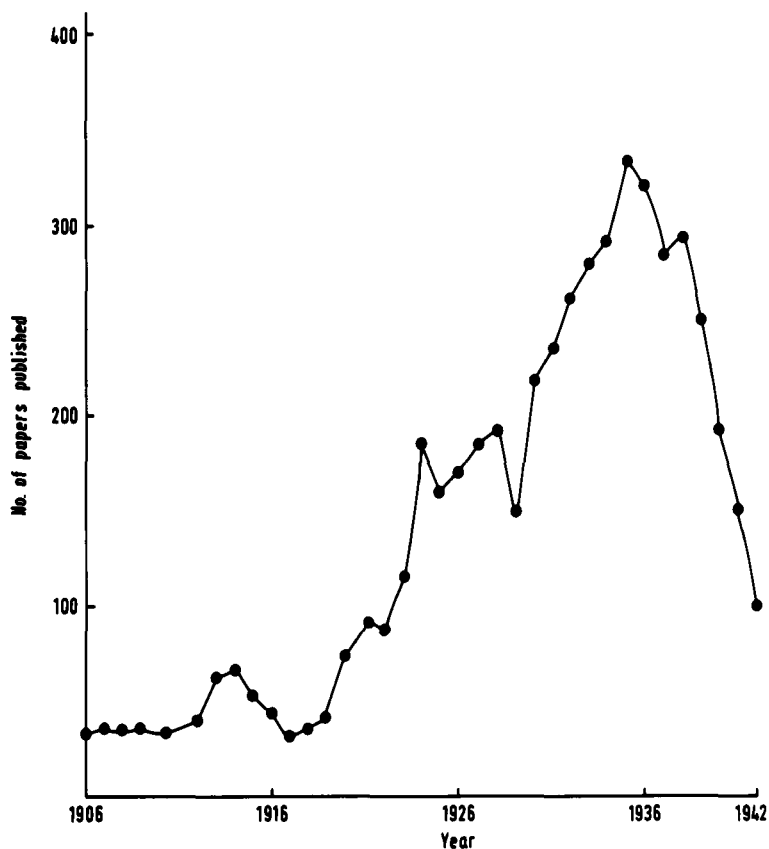


Fig. 6.1. Annual number of papers published in the *Biochemical Journal* from 1906, when it was founded, until 1942, when Sir Charles Harington retired from the post of Editor.

Cambridge University Press (C.U.P.) did not help matters. All these problems arose again in 1965–1985 but on a much larger scale and are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. However, they were there right from the start. From 1913 to 1920 the overall profit on the *Journal* was £383.18.1 (£383.90) [c. £7000] but it has to be remembered that all the editorial activity over that period was unpaid. The C.U.P. agreed in 1920 that “all profits in the *Journal* is the property of the Society, but is subject to the right of the Press for certain considerations received, to veto what it may consider an improper use of the money”; apparently this represented a concession to the Society [1]. In 1920 The Royal Society donated £50 [£900] for the publication of a series of long and important papers and in 1922 Professor O. Warburg paid for the publication of his papers.

The continual but legitimate demand by the *Biochemical Journal* for additional pages came to a head in 1921 and an appeal was made for funds. It resulted in donations of ten guineas (£10.50) [£280] from Glaxo Ltd and British Glues and Chemicals and of five guineas (£5.25) [£140] from Mr Chaston Chapman. The costs continued inevitably to rise and in 1923 the C.U.P. agreed to a new arrangement which was slightly more favourable to the Society: their commission was set at 12½% on both sales and printing costs and the Society would receive all profits and the right and responsibility to fix the price of the *Journal* and of reprints. Because of this increased responsibility placed on the Society an Editorial Committee was set up, consisting of the Society Chairman, the Honorary Secretary, the Honorary Treasurer and the Editors, to oversee developments. In spite of these changes the extra pages in volume 17 (1924) used up all the Society’s profits and by 1925 a further increase in size of 500 pages caused a loss of £33 [£650] that year. A last minute grant-in-aid by The Royal Society saved the day. But the problem would not go away and in 1927 the *Journal* drew on a further £150 [£3000] of the Society’s funds. The large commission charged by the C.U.P. was now considered the main cause in this continued financial instability. The Press again made concessions to representations made by a high-powered visiting group consisting of Professor [Sir Rudolph] Peters (Fig. 3.11), J. A. Gardiner (Fig. 2.1), Sir Arthur Harden (Fig. 1.5) and Sir Robert Robinson. The rebate on printing charges was increased from 7½ to 12% and the 12½% commission on members’ copies was waived. This change, made retrospective for 1928, saved £243 [£5000], about 10% of the annual cost of producing the *Journal*.

However, the obvious solution, which had been looming for some time, was adopted in 1931 as the result of a projected deficit of £400–£500. The annual subscription for members was increased to 2 guineas (£2.10) [£50] and for non-members

to 3 guineas (£3.15) [£75]. This year also saw the first discussions in Committee of a possible move away from the C.U.P.

An important development in 1934 was the decision to publish the *Journal* monthly instead of bimonthly.

So, after some 20 years of what might reasonably be called a "hand to mouth existence" sustained by dedicated Editors, the *Biochemical Journal* emerged as a well established publication and an acceptable if unexciting consolidation period lasted until the end of the Second World War. Indeed the finances were such that the Society did not have to call on funds made available in 1941 to The Royal Society by the Rockefeller Foundation for those societies which were finding difficulty in keeping their learned journals going in war time. In contrast, £1000 [£17,000] was transferred to the reserve fund. When Harington's resignation in 1942 was accepted a special sub-committee [J. H. Bushill (Fig. 5.1), Sir Frank Young (Fig. 3.12), N. W. Pirie, W. T. J. Morgan (Plate 4A), B. C. J. G. Knight and Sir Jack Drummond] was constituted to consider the future of the *Journal*. As a result of their recommendations the main Committee agreed that the affairs of the *Biochemical Journal* should be run by an Editorial Board of about six, with one member being designated Chairman and the remainder Members of the Editorial Board; these replaced the previous Editor and Assistant Editors. This basic arrangement, albeit enlarged, exists to this day. Honoraria were abolished but effective secretarial assistance was provided for the Chairman who dealt directly with authors on behalf of the Board. The Chairman became *ex officio* a member of the main Committee as did one member of the Editorial Board, annually, in rotation. A recommendation, which was to save the Society considerable amounts of money in the future, was made by N. W. Pirie; he proposed that volumes should not expand to cope with the papers available but should be confined to 600 pages. F. G. Young was elected the first Chairman of the Editorial Board in 1942. Six members of the Editorial Board were also appointed; they were chosen so as to cover the major fields of Biochemistry. Today (1986) there are some 50 members of the Board as well as four Deputy Chairmen and an Advisory Panel of over 250 members.

Professor E. J. King (Fig. 3.2) replaced F. G. Young in 1946 and an Honorarium of £200 [£3000] p.a. was introduced for the Chairman. King ran the *Journal* with the scientific help of Dr W. Klyne and Dr I. D. P. Wootton from his Department at the Post-Graduate Medical School at Hammersmith. It was not until 1950 that honoraria of £50 [£600] were voted for members of the Editorial Board. Today Board members are paid *pro rata* for the work they do. It is a complicated arrangement but allows for the size of the Board to be increased without increasing the overall cost.

There had always been times when the Society had been dissatisfied with the C.U.P., either from the point of view of speed of production or cost of production, or because of its inflexible attitude to what appeared to be reasonable requests. Serious problems arose later, as we shall see, but one unexpected confrontation in E. J. King's time was recalled by Dr R. L. M. Synge, who was a member of King's Editorial Board. In Synge's own words:

"He (King) had been asked by the Committee to find printers cheaper than the C.U.P. and thought he had succeeded, when some smallish printers somewhere in E. of England had tendered at $\frac{2}{3}$ the rate charged by C.U.P. and had set up a creditable sample $\frac{1}{2}$ sheet from TSS rich in figures, symbols and green ink. With the sample in his pocket, Earl King went to Cambridge to see a high managerial personage (HMP) in a sombre room of the Pitt Press, Trumpington Street. He started by saying he thought the C.U.P. were overcharging the Society.

HMP I realize we're pricey, as printers go, but you'd have to look a long way to find someone who'd do as well with all those symbols and formulae in the copy you send us.

EJK (drawing sample from pocket): Well, what do you think of this?

HMP (having examined sample): Do you mind if I take it over to the window for a closer look? (Does so, peering at it through a magnifying glass).

HMP (returns from window, hands back sample): I'm sorry — we did that.

Interview ends, neither party having any more to say."

King was followed in 1952 by Professor A. Neuberger (Plate 3A), by which time the number of Editorial Board members had risen to 13. Again the *Journal* office was in rented accommodation in the Chairman's place of work, the National Institute for Medical Research at Mill Hill (see also Chapter 2).

When Neuberger resigned from the chairmanship on moving from Mill Hill the Committee agonized about the possibility of appointing a full-time Editor. They eventually decided to continue with the same arrangements as before but to provide day to day help by appointing a 'full-time Editorial Assistant' with appropriate experience in Biochemistry or Organic Chemistry to deal with routine and technical matters. Early in 1955 Mr F. Clark (Fig. 6.2), was appointed to this post under the title 'Secretary to the Editorial Board', and was in the post when the new Chairman, A. G. Ogston (Plate 2B) took over from Neuberger. Ogston, who acted from 1955 to 1959, travelled from Oxford every Tuesday to spend the day on *Journal* business. He instituted the post of Deputy Chairman. The first holder was Dr T. S. Work, later to be Chairman of the Society's main Committee (Plate 1A). The other members of the Board now numbered 14.



Fig. 6.2. Mr F. Clark. Secretary to the Editorial Board, 1955–1968.

One of the first requests to Ogston from the main Committee was to consider whether the Society might become its own publisher. The Committee was still concerned over its arrangements with the C.U.P. and had noted that The Royal Society had successfully taken over publication of their journals from the publishing house. Together with Work and Clark, Ogston discussed the *Journal's* problems with Officers of The Royal Society and it was agreed that a similar arrangement for the Society would be profitable in the long run, if not immediately, although considerable administrative reorganization would be necessary. The main Committee's reaction was, however, cautious and no moves had been made when in 1956 Pergamon Press wrote offering to open discussions about publishing the *Journal* more cheaply and efficiently than the C.U.P. Investigations into this possibility were undertaken but it was decided not to take up the offer.

In a recent letter Dr Ogston has pointed out that, during his chairmanship:

"the Editorial Board was collectively a happy and harmonious body; individually, I was impressed by the care and attention that Editors gave to the interests of authors as well as to those of the *Journal*. Characteristic of this (although an extreme example) was the action of one member of the Board who, over many months, corresponded with and visited an author, making suggestions for confirmatory work which resulted in great improvement of the paper".

The efforts of the Editorial Board at that time mirrored the attitude of its Chairman, who was so concerned about unnecessary misunderstandings with authors that he spent much time trying to devise ways to deal with this. An ingenious solution suggested itself:

"Much of the (never very serious) dissatisfaction that authors felt about the Editorial Board arose, I believe, from their ignorance of the editorial process and its aims, and I never lost a chance to do what I could to explain them. This led me to the idea that we might make a facsimile booklet to demonstrate this process, editors' reports, Chairman's letters and all, but it was too difficult. Our specimen paper would have (if it were to spill the whole beans) to be acceptable, but to require extensive revision. I could not imagine the author of any 'real' paper of this kind being willing to have it publicly exhibited in this way. So a phoney paper would have to be used, inserted (without Editors knowing it) at the start of the process and withdraw from it before going to the Press. I found I could not devise such a paper."

Three main issues which exercised the Board during Ogston's term of office (and presumably to varying degree at most other times in the Board's existence) were: "how to keep costs down and how to keep down the interval between submission and publication and what should constitute 'Biochemistry' in relation to the subject matter of papers being

judged suitable for the *Journal*". The result was an agreed statement that the *Biochemical Journal* "should publish papers in all fields of Biochemistry — plant, animal and microbiological — provided that the results make a new contribution to biochemical knowledge; or that they describe methods applicable to biochemical problems". In spite of this public assertion of policy many plant biochemists felt, rightly or wrongly, that they were discriminated against. In the early 1960s the Plant Phenolics Group widened its horizons and became the Phytochemical Society and founded the journal *Phytochemistry* with the help of a commercial publisher. This developed into a flourishing international publication, which celebrates its 21st birthday in the same year as the Biochemical Society celebrates its 75th anniversary. If the Biochemical Society had been a little more adventurous in the early 1960s it might have had another prestigious journal under its wing. The nagging feeling that plant Biochemistry has not been well treated certainly persists to this day, although, to insert a personal note, I have never found it so. But there is one eminent member of the Society who would not agree with this and who has not published in the *Biochemical Journal* for many years.

In 1959 Ogston was succeeded by Professor W. V. Thorpe (Plate 2B), whose period of office until 1963 was difficult mainly because things came to a head with C.U.P. The *Journal* was expanding rapidly but a new financial arrangement, proposed in 1961 by the Press, was in no way to the liking of the then Treasurer (F. A. Robinson; Fig. 4.2). The situation was described by R. A. Morton [1]:

"The Treasurer had reported early in 1961 that the Cambridge University Press proposed a new financial arrangement to be operated from 1 January that year. The commission of 15 per cent on all sales of the *Journal* and other publications would remain as previously. The commission on cost of production of the *Journal* had been 2½ per cent but the proposed new basis was 'a commission of 3½ per cent of the volume price (or where there was no volume price the aggregate prices of the parts) multiplied by the number of copies of the volume being printed'. It was calculated that on the figures for 1959 the Society would have saved about £900. The Treasurer was instructed to look into the effect of the new proposals and, after analysing the figures for 1958, 1959 and 1960, and extrapolating to 1962, he reported that the financial trend of the proposals was unfavourable to the Society. He would have preferred a sliding scale based on the old system whereby the percentage commission could be progressively reduced as the circulation increased."

With an average print run of 7000 copies the Society felt that it should have been given better terms but the Press was adamant; they believed that the successful journals they published should subsidize the less successful ones. Apart from this the loss of about £1500 [£11,000] made by the *Journal* in 1961 was, according to W. J. Whelan (Fig. 3.10),

then Honorary Secretary, due to the absurdly low rate set by C.U.P. for the cost of separates: "Some three or four years later, when we had left C.U.P. ... the true cost was found to be ten times that C.U.P. were charging".

If the Society were to become its own publisher there was clearly a difficult time ahead. However, a life-line appeared in March 1962 when the Chemical Society, now the Royal Society of Chemistry, which had recently set up a distribution centre, offered to distribute the *Biochemical Journal* for £2700 [£20,000] per annum and to store back numbers for £250 [£1800] p.a.; the corresponding figures for the C.U.P. were £8000 [£58,000] and £400 [£2900], respectively. This convinced the Committee that considerable economies, and possibly profit, would result if the Society became its own publisher. However, the C.U.P. was not willing to print the *Biochemical Journal* if it were not also the publisher. On the other hand they agreed to continue with the existing arrangements until new printers could be found. By June 1962 the Committee had decided to break with the C.U.P. and an active search was made to find an appropriate publisher so that the new arrangements could begin in January 1964. The Editorial Board were most unhappy over these developments, for they felt that "they were being treated more as junior employees than equal partners whilst they were, at the same time, aware that the sales of the *Journal* underpinned financially the expanding activities of the Society" [2].

The proposed change which would involve the loss of the great experience of the C.U.P. "reader" for detailed editing would, they felt, inevitably result not only in lowering the high standards set by the Editors but also in causing them a great deal of extra work. These points, unjustified in the event, and others were put to the Committee in November 1962 by Thorpe, who felt considerable personal loyalty to the C.U.P. The financial advantage which, according to the protagonists of change, would accrue from employing the proposed new printers was also challenged. After a long and heated debate the proposal to leave the C.U.P. and to employ new printers was carried by eight votes to six. After the voting the Chairman, Professor J. N. Davidson (Fig. 3.14), indicated that he strongly supported the proposal. At this meeting Thorpe's imminent retirement, after ten years of devoted service to the *Journal*, was reported.

The Editorial Board met shortly after the November meeting of the main Committee; they "read with interest statements by the officers in favour of the change of printers but remained unconvinced about the wisdom of the change". As they considered themselves no longer sufficiently independent to conduct the business of the *Biochemical Journal* the Board decided to resign *en bloc* from 1 January 1963. They ameliorated this uncompromising position somewhat by

agreeing to continue in an acting capacity until a new Board could be constituted. This interim arrangement was to be as short as possible and would not extend beyond 1 September 1963.

At the Committee meeting on 11 December Dr H. J. Rogers (Plate 3B), the Deputy Chairman of the Editorial Board, who was shortly to be confirmed as Chairman, presented the Board's case after which Davidson emphasized that the Rules of the Society clearly indicated that the ultimate responsibility for the management of the Society's affairs lay with the elected members of the Committee. The point was clearly made that the Editorial Board was under the general jurisdiction of the main Committee. After much emotional debate it was agreed that four members of the Committee and four of the Editorial Board should meet as a working party under the chairmanship of Professor N. F. MacLagan on 14 December to seek a way of dealing with the impasse. The proposed compromise to defer the arrangements for one year satisfied the Board members and was accepted by the Committee members with, one suspects, some relief. The printers with whom they had made preliminary arrangements turned out not to be big enough for the job. The working party also recommended that an Advisory Committee for Publications be set up as a co-ordinating body.

The Editorial Board accepted the proposals of the working party and the Advisory Committee for Publications (ACP) was set up; its constitution is given in Chapter 3. At its meeting on 20 September 1963 the Committee considered the unanimous recommendation of the ACP that as from 1 January 1964 the *Biochemical Journal* be printed by Wm Clowes (later Spottiswoode, Ballantyne Co. Ltd) and published by the Society using the Chemical Society as its agents. It was calculated that this would result in savings of some £3600 [£24,000] in 1965. The Editorial Board did not object to this arrangement and the Committee put it into action with all speed. The Chairman of the Board (Dr Rogers) played a big role in bringing these discussions to a satisfactory conclusion. Thus ended one of the most difficult problems the main Committee has ever had to face, but there is no doubt that the final outcome was advantageous to the Society. It is ironic to find that only very recently (October 1985) the printing of the *Journal*, volume 231, has reverted to the C.U.P., who some 22 years on do an excellent printing job economically but now with no publishing strings attached.

6.3 The *Biochemical Journal* 1965–1986

The trauma of the changes in publishing the *Biochemical Journal* demanded a period of quiet consolidation and this was provided under the chairmanship of Dr H. J. Rogers. However,

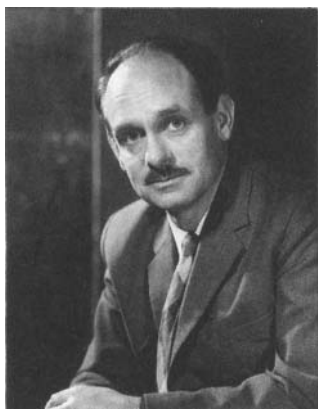


Fig. 6.3. Dr W. N. Aldridge, O.B.E. Chairman of the Editorial Board of the *Biochemical Journal*, 1965–1969.

his successor, Dr W. N. Aldridge (1965–1969, Fig. 6.3), realized that further pressure was building up on the Editorial Board with the rapidly increasing number of papers being submitted in ever-widening aspects of Biochemistry. He agreed to take on the job only if the number of Editorial Board members were doubled, from 18 to 36. He wrote: “You will be amused that this was done so rapidly that at my first Board meeting we had to wear name tags”. During this time, the number of Deputy Chairmen was increased from one to three and these were the nucleus of the Editorial Committee established by Aldridge. This met more frequently than the Editorial Board and enabled detailed technical decisions to be made quickly (the Editorial Board meets only twice a year), so that publication time could be reduced to a minimum. The relatively long publication time was considered one of the main reasons for the *Biochemical Journal* then not attracting papers in the area of so-called Molecular Biology, which at that time was alive with exciting observations. Delayed publication time was certainly one reason but it was the enthusiasm and drive of the young molecular biologists who wanted to get their results to the widest audience of like-minded specialists which led them to eschew general, archival types of journal and to form new specialized journals; at that time the *Journal of Molecular Biology* was a favourite outlet. The problem remains up to the time of writing and one notes that many ‘molecular biology’ investigations are first reported at Society meetings but the ensuing substantive papers do not appear in the *Biochemical Journal*.

Professor D. G. Walker (Plate 2B), Aldridge’s successor, continued the drive to cut down publication time and succeeded in attracting so many papers that the increasing size of the *Journal* sometimes caused financial tremors in the Society Committee (see Chapter 4). During this time the ACP was briefed to search for possible new Society publications. A detailed proposal for a new “Journal of Sub-cellular Biochemistry” was considered but the perceived possible overlap and competition with the *Biochemical Journal* resulted in its rejection. However, an important compromise emerged: the *Journal* was sectionalized so that alternate issues were devoted to *Molecular Aspects* (blue cover) and *Cellular Aspects* (orange cover) respectively. This not only emphasized the widespread coverage of the *Journal* but allowed members to subscribe to one half of the *Journal* at the run-on cost. This was an important concession as printing costs and thus subscription rates were rapidly increasing. The sectionalization continued for 11 years and only recently (1985) have the two parts been re-combined; however, a sectionalized contents page has been retained.

During Professor Walker’s period of office the *Biochemical Journal* lost a faithful servant when the Editorial Secretary, Mr

Frank Clark (Fig. 6.2), was killed in a road accident in 1968. He dealt with all aspects of the day to day activities of the Editorial Office with great efficiency and dedication; he was very involved with the transfer of the *Journal* from the C.U.P. to new printers. Frank Clark was succeeded by Dr J. D. Killip.

Two developments during Dr J. Dingle's (Fig. 6.4) period as Chairman of the Editorial Board (1975–1982) were of particular importance. One was the reorganization of the Editorial Office, which had to be carried through under a cloud of staff problems. In 1978 Mr A. (Tony) G. J. Evans (Plate 2A) was appointed Editorial Manager and later Dr A. S. Beedle was recruited as Deputy Editorial Manager with special responsibility for the *Biochemical Journal*. These appointments and the resulting new procedures in journal management combined to produce a more effective editorial unit, which remains in being at the time of writing.

The second development stemmed from a suggestion from the Committee that handling charges should be instituted as a way of dealing with financial problems. This idea was entirely against the publication ethos of British science in general, based as it is on the right of free publication subject to peer review. It is difficult to decide whether the Committee proposal was a serious suggestion or coat trailing. The Editorial Board not unexpectedly rejected the, to them, preposterous idea out of hand but the Chairman did set up a small sub-committee to look into the procedures for handling papers and the opportunities for further streamlining editorial activities. The outcome was a number of far-reaching proposals which have proved highly beneficial; they include (1) the introduction of a panel of 250–300 expert Editorial Advisers who are given free membership of the Society in return for agreeing to review up to ten papers a year (about one-third of the advisers are from overseas, thus helping to emphasize the international image of the *Journal*); (2) a speeding up of reviewing so that decisions on papers are given within 6–8 weeks of their receipt in the Editorial Office; (3) the introduction of Reviews and *B.J.* Letters, of which more later; (4) the agreement that the Editorial Board should be internationalized (currently 11 of the 50 Board members are from overseas). The continual fight to reduce the publication time has, with occasional hiccoughs, over the past 30 years been successful (Fig. 6.5): the delay in the 1950s was some eight months; in the 1980s it is just a little more than six months.

Recent recommendations have speeded up the aim to project the *Biochemical Journal* as an International Journal of Biochemistry. This began with the institution in the 1970s of overseas advisers, who have now been subsumed within the Editorial Board. This development has resulted in the “love–hate” relationship, as one recent member of the Board put it, between the main Committee and the Editorial Board,



Fig. 6.4. Dr J. Dingle. Chairman of the Editorial Board of the *Biochemical Journal*, 1975–1982.

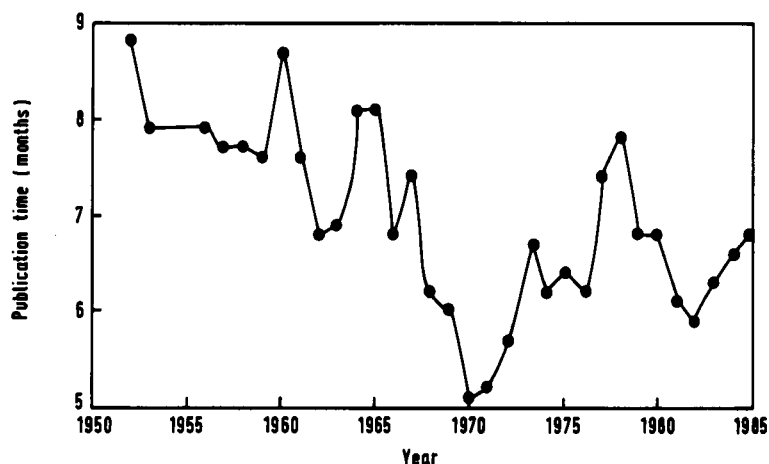


Fig. 6.5. Variation in average publication time of papers submitted to the *Biochemical Journal* between 1950 and 1985.



Fig. 6.6. Professor C. I. Pogson. Chairman of the Editorial Board of the *Biochemical Journal*, 1982–1987.

the former maintaining that the production of the *Biochemical Journal* is only one aspect of the activities designed to give maximum service to Society members, whereas the latter, in general, maintains that as a well established international journal it need not be closely associated with a national society. During Professor Pogson's (Fig. 6.6) chairmanship (1982–1987) the *Journal* had a stand under its own banner rather than that of the Society at the FASEB (Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology) meeting in 1984 at St Louis and in 1985 at Anaheim (CA) because of "the difficulty of trying to project an international image for the *Journal* with a national image for the Society". The answers to a questionnaire distributed at the FASEB meeting and at the IUB meeting at Amsterdam (1985) have been processed and the conclusions reported in the *Biochemical Society Bulletin* [3].

This schizophrenia will undoubtedly continue into the future but one is left wondering what deleterious effect, if any, the sponsorship by the Biochemical Society has on the already impressive international image of the *Biochemical Journal*. Arguments about umbilical cords aside, there is no doubt that the *Journal* is attracting many more overseas contributions (Table 6.1). Considerable effort has been made in the last few years to dissipate the belief which has arisen over the years that the somewhat rigid attitude of the Editors to relatively minor problems of presentation has discouraged authors from submitting their more exciting papers to the *Biochemical Journal*. Authors are now allowed more stylistic freedom and an extended general use of abbreviations, and they can now choose to give their references either in the Harvard system in which references given as, for example, Jones & Smith (1984) in the text are listed alphabetically at the end of the text, or in the numerical system, that is sequential numbering in the text corresponding to the numbered list of references. Running

Table 6.1. International origins of papers published in the *Biochemical Journal*

Year	U.K. (%)	U.S.A. (%)	Europe (%)	Elsewhere (%)
1920	73.3	1.3	9.1	15.3
1930	80.5	3.6	3.2	12.7
1940	81.1	6.3	3.2	9.4
1950	88.6	0.9	1.4	9.3
1960	69.4	5.9	4.4	20.8
1970	60.9	13.9	7.3	14.9
1980	45.2	22.1	15.9	16.7
1986	41.7	29.4	22.1	6.8

parallel with this increased freedom of style is the requirement for authors to write as succinctly as possible, a requirement enforced by the current practice that, except under special circumstances, papers should be no longer than eight printed pages. This restriction also allows the Board to keep within the size limits laid down by the Committee without refusing good papers. The recent return to the C.U.P. as printers has been accompanied by many stylistic changes to give the *Journal* a modern look. The 'desectionalization' of the *Journal* in 1984 was achieved only after prolonged discussion, not least over what colour the cover of the merged *Journal* should be. An important result of the merger is that as the *Journal* now appears every fortnight any paper just missing inclusion in an issue is held back only two weeks. Previously the delay would have been one month, because each section appeared only monthly. This represents one victory in the constant battle to improve publication time. Apart from these efforts more conventional public relations ploys have been used in attempts to increase the sales of the *Journal*, particularly in the U.S.A. and Japan. To this end Dr G. A. Snow (Fig. 6.7) was appointed Promotions Organizer in 1976. He and his colleagues mounted a large exercise to attract new subscribers. Personal letters were sent to some 60 named individuals in various institutions and resulted in three new subscriptions; this was regarded as a good yield but "it was time-consuming and could not easily be repeated". Snow went on:

"A library will subscribe to the *Journal* if there is sufficient insistence from the practising scientists within the institution. The librarian is always faced with conflicting demands which have to be met from a limited budget, and will respond according to the urgency of the demand by the users. There will always be places where interest is marginal and subscriptions are liable to be cancelled when funds are scarce. To some extent those losses are balanced by unexpected new subscriptions from places where there has been an upsurge in biochemical activity.

"To a large degree the *Journal* sells itself on its scientific reputation. It cannot be treated as a commercial commodity and sold by

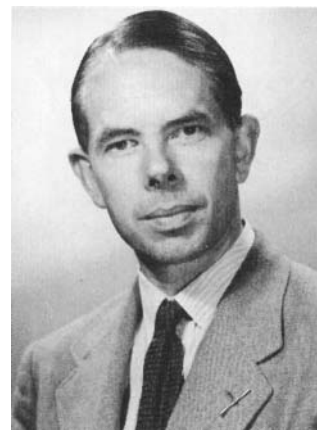


Fig. 6.7 Dr G. A. Snow. First Promotions Organizer, 1976.

skilful persuasion. Advertising has little place in promoting the *Journal*. One intractable problem is to whom promotional material should be addressed. Librarians receive shoals of leaflets and brochures. At best they put them on display for a time; most go directly into the waste paper basket. Directors of institutions rarely have any direct interest in Biochemistry, and will treat advertising material with indifference. Working biochemists will already know of the *Journal* and need no reminder."

In relation to the question of promotion, it has recently been agreed that it is not worthwhile for the Society's publications to be separately represented at the meetings of the American Library Association. Attempts to "promote" Molecular Biology papers have been made by distributing a leaflet to members of the Nucleic Acid and Molecular Biology Group and members of EMBO. The assessment of the results is not yet available.

6.3.1 Rapid Publications

Accelerated publications were first introduced in 1964 in order to attract significant new work to the *Biochemical Journal*. They were named "Short Communications" and were printed at the end of each issue of the *Journal*. The era of rapid publication journals was emerging and, in spite of the enthusiasm of the Advisory Committee for Publications for launching a "quickie journal", the conservatism of the Editorial Board and General Committee carried the day and the idea that the Society should publish such a journal was not accepted. It is not often during its history that the Society has missed a clear opportunity of being one of the first in the field. Eventually this gap was filled in Europe by the launching in 1968 of *FEBS Letters*, which has been a great success, has maintained high standards, thanks to Professor S. P. Datta, a member of the Society, who was Editor from 1968 to 1985. It has had no obvious ill effects on the FEBS archival journal, *European Journal of Biochemistry* (*EJB*). It is interesting to note that the Editors of *EJB* opposed the publication of *FEBS Letters*, but presumably the FEBS Publication Committee had at that time more teeth than its Biochemical Society counterpart.

The Society's compromise reaction to the move towards a rapid publication journal was, as just indicated, the inclusion of Short Communications within normal issues of the *Journal*. In 1968 the Communications were revamped into the form in which they exist today — "Rapid Papers". The publication time of Rapid Papers is about one half that of normal papers (e.g. 16.3 weeks and 27.8 weeks respectively in 1983) and they now represent some 12–13% of the total papers published, whereas in the mid-70s the percentage was around 17–18%. The only difference between Rapid Papers and full papers is the length — the former must not occupy more than four

Journal pages. The quality of the publication is the main criterion for acceptance — “urgency” is not one, being a very subjective assessment. In fact any submitted paper of four or fewer pages is treated as a Rapid Paper with the authors’ agreement.

6.3.2 *BJ* Reviews and *BJ* Letters

In 1980 it was decided to introduce these two new types of paper into the *Biochemical Journal*, thus reversing a categorical rejection of Reviews by the Editorial Board in 1964. The Editorial Board was fortunate to persuade Professor J. A. Lucy (Fig. 6.8), who had just retired as a Deputy Chairman of the Board, to accept the job of pioneering this venture. He writes:

“Initially, there was some apprehension among individual readers and contributors to the *Biochemical Journal* that the publication of review articles would increase still further the existing pressure on space in the *Journal*. It was, however, not intended by the Editorial Board that reviews should occupy more than a very small part of the *Journal* and, in the event, the review articles have proved to be popular with research workers, university teachers and students. Indeed, one student at the University of Surrey was able to quote extensively in an oral examination, for the benefit of the external examiner, from a review only some three weeks after it had appeared in print! Initially, also, rather pessimistic forecasts were made that, because of the number of review journals now being published, it would not be possible to attract good reviews to the *Biochemical Journal*. Fortunately, this has never been the case, and reviews are in fact now being published more frequently than they were at the outset. Although some difficulty was experienced at first in commissioning reviews because prospective authors occasionally feared that their articles might not be as widely read as they would like, this ceased to be a problem after about two years, and approximately one third of the reviews now being published are actually suggested by prospective authors. A majority of the reviews are nevertheless still commissioned.

“*BJ* Letters provide an opportunity to discuss, criticize or expand particular points made in published work, or to present a new hypothesis. At the time that *BJ* Letters were initiated, the Editorial Board decided that — when a Letter is polemical in nature — a reply may be solicited from other interested parties before its publication. This has proved to be an interesting feature of the Letters, and a number have been published simultaneously with a reply from an interested party. Ding-dong counter replies, and counter-counter replies, of the kind that feature in some other publications are, however, not published in the *Journal*. Although tact is required in handling the occasional, abrasive communication, a majority of the submissions received are written in the spirit of discussion that the Editorial Board wished to encourage as a feature of *BJ* Letters, and the Letters appear to be fulfilling a useful function, since the number of submissions is increasing.”



Fig. 6.8 Professor J. A. Lucy, Deputy Chairman of the Editorial Board of the *Biochemical Journal*, 1979–1986.

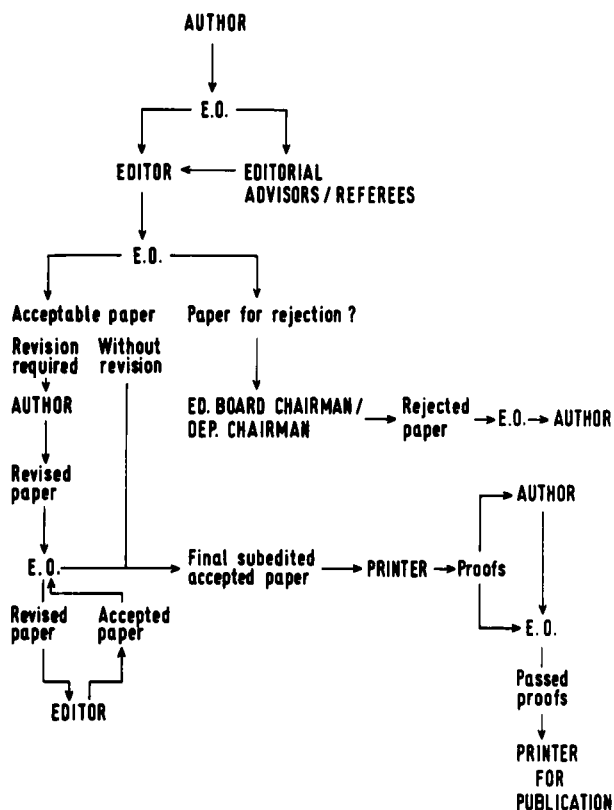


Fig. 6.9. Flow sheet for the passage of a paper submitted to the *Biochemical Journal* through to its final preparation for publication. E.O., Editorial Office.

6.3.3 Editorial Office

In keeping with the highly professional production of the *Biochemical Journal* the Editorial Office is a very efficient organization and the flow-sheet (Fig. 6.9) indicates how submitted papers are dealt with.

In spite of all the problems since 1945 just described the *Biochemical Journal* has sailed serenely on with an ever-increasing number of papers being submitted and published (Fig. 6.10); submissions of Rapid Papers is also increasing but the number accepted for publication is now steady at around 100 per annum (Fig. 6.11); the Reviews have established themselves as authoritative expositions of critically important areas of Biochemistry. All this adds up to a prestige *Journal* which continues to provide substantial income for the Society.

6.4 Clinical Science

On 10 and 11 April 1954 the Association of Clinical Biochemists and the Biochemical Society held meetings in Edinburgh on successive days and gave publicity to each other's meetings so that members of either Society could attend both meetings. From this arose the idea discussed

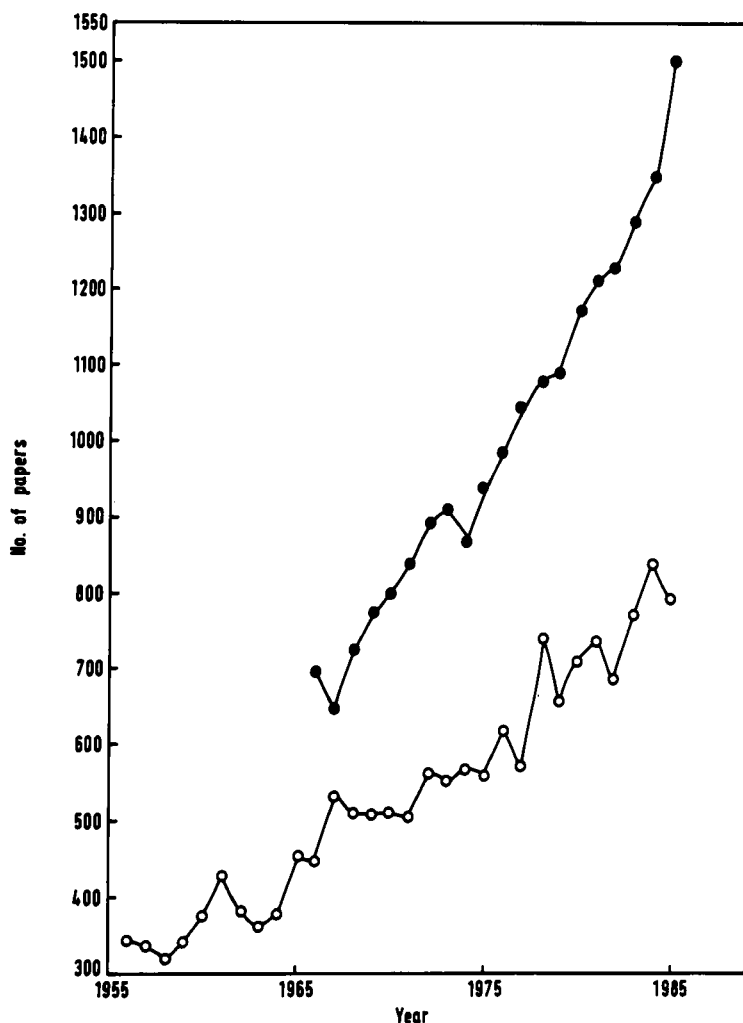


Fig. 6.10. Number of full papers submitted (●—●) to the *Biochemical Journal* and number accepted (○—○) over the period 1955 to 1985.

formally in 1956 that a 'Journal of Clinical Chemistry' be established and in 1957 the Society responded positively to a memorandum recommending this circulated by the then Honorary Secretary (Dr C. E. Dalglish; Plate 4C). Meanwhile, the Medical Research Society had approached the Biochemical Society with the suggestion that its journal, *Clinical Science* (which was founded as long ago as 1909 under the title *Heart*), should be broadened with the Society's collaboration. The Association of Clinical Biochemists agreed to widen the discussions with the Society to include this new proposal and in October 1957 the following proposals were recommended:

- (i) that *Clinical Science* should continue to be the medium for the publication of papers primarily on diseases of man
- (ii) that papers on pure methodology would not in general be accepted

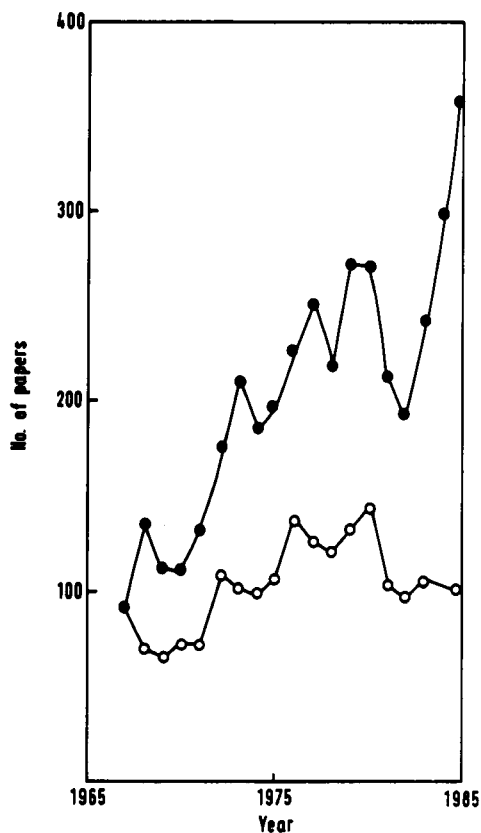


Fig. 6.11. Number of 'rapid' papers submitted (●—●) to the *Biochemical Journal* and number accepted (○—○) over the period 1967 to 1985.

- (iii) that there should be parity of editorship between the Medical Research Society and the Biochemical Society
- (iv) that the Medical Research Society should recommend the Trustees of *Clinical Science* to increase their number to four, two of whom should be representatives of the Biochemical Society
- (v) the Trustees would be the legal owners but would have no concern with the day to day running of the journal.

These proposals were generally accepted by the Committee and the necessary legal agreements, which basically meant that *Clinical Science* would be run jointly and the profits would be shared equally between the two Societies, after deducting charges for work of the Editorial Office and administrative overheads, was ratified in 1960. Four Trustees, two from each Society, were appointed and a Committee of Management set up which consisted of the Honorary Secretary (the Senior Secretary if more than one) and the Honorary Treasurer of each Society together with Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Editorial Board and one other representative from each Society. The Editorial Board was made up of four persons from each Society with the possibility that one of the Bio-

chemical Society's members could be nominated by the Association of Clinical Biochemists. The Societies were to agree on the appointment of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman so that they did not both represent the same Society. The maximum term of service on the Board was to be five years which could be increased to eight if the member were Chairman or Deputy Chairman at the end of his five year stint. There was also a clear statement in the Agreement that in the case of any conflict between the Editorial Board and the Committee of Management the view of the Committee of Management would prevail. The Trustees at the present time are the Biochemical Society itself, as a limited liability company, and two individuals, Sir John McMichael and Sir Melville Arnott, appointed by the Medical Research Society.

Each Society contributed £1000 [£7500] to a joint account to finance the journal and arrangements were made with Messrs Shaw & Sons to print it and with the C.U.P. to publish it. Publication under a joint Committee of Management eventually began in 1962. The problems the *Biochemical Journal* had with the C.U.P. in the 1960s was reflected in the administration of *Clinical Science* and in 1963 the Society Committee accepted a recommendation from the Committee of Management of *Clinical Science* that as from 1 January 1965 the publishing should be undertaken by Blackwells Scientific Publications Ltd.

In 1965 the membership of the Committee of Management was enlarged by increasing the non-office bearing representatives from each Society from one to two. In 1977 a slight amendment was that in the case of the Biochemical Society, the Secretary should be redefined as the Honorary Publications Secretary (the Chairman of the Publications Board).

As indicated above the Editorial Board began with eight members, four representing each Society, but, with the ever-increasing number of papers to process, is now 35 (the maximum agreed with the Committee of Management). In December 1977 the Committee accepted the reality of the difficulty of maintaining an exact numerical balance in the composition of the Editorial Board and agreed that this parity need not be strictly observed provided a "reasonable equilibrium was maintained". The Committee also agreed that the Chairman of the Editorial Board could seek new editors from outside the two Societies provided that such editors would accept membership of one of the Societies on joining the Board. Furthermore it was agreed that all appointments to the Editorial Board needed to be ratified by the Committee of Management. Because of the increased work load a second Deputy Chairman was appointed in 1985. All the editorial activities are today carried out in the Editorial Office of the Biochemical Society; it represents about 20% of the work-load of the Office.

A chronic problem which has recently been solved is the commitment to publish abstracts of communications read at Medical Research Society meetings. This took up considerable space (about 70 pages out of an annual total of 1536 allowed by the Committee of Management) which the Editorial Board increasingly felt could be better used for original, refereed papers. The Abstracts are now issued in the form of separately bound Supplements to *Clinical Science* circulated with the journal at no extra cost to subscribers. The rejection rate of submitted papers runs at around 55–60%. This rather high figure does not apparently deter authors from submitting papers because the annual number of submissions is still on the increase (372 in 1980 compared with 488 in 1985). About 50% of the published papers come from the U.K., with around 27% from the U.S.A., 13.5% from Continental Europe and 9% from Australasia. This distribution compares favourably with that of the *Biochemical Journal*, although there has been no overt attempt to internationalize the Editorial Board.

During the first years of the amalgamation *Clinical Science* was losing money, on average about £5000 p.a., but this situation gradually improved until in 1980 it was making a small profit. Around this time the Medical Research Society were seriously questioning the profitability of the journal, particularly since the International Society of Hypertension (which had regularly used *Clinical Science* Supplements to publish their annual meetings Communications) had decided to transfer to a new journal which was launched by a commercial publisher who guaranteed that Society an annual income of £20,000. The officers of the Biochemical Society looked into the matter and decided that with the fullest possible use of newly available printing technologies it would be possible to achieve similar profitability with *Clinical Science*. The newly appointed Chairman of the Committee of Management, Dr D. C. Watts (Plate 3B) accepted this view and advocated it so enthusiastically that a five year contract was agreed. The change in profitability was quick and dramatic, the annual surplus for 1983 was £48,747 and this increased to £56,918 in 1984 and to £59,518 in 1985. At the moment of writing both Societies seem well satisfied with the situation. The numbers of subscribers has also followed the general pattern noted for other journals increasing well until the late 1970s, when the downfall averages some 4% per annum, a characteristic of most scientific journals. However, in 1986 the downward trend was reversed and the number of subscribers showed a small but significant increase.

6.5 *Biochemical Society Transactions*

The length of the gestation period leading to the birth of *Biochemical Society Transactions* (BST) well illustrates how the

Society's present administrative structure can lead to delayed action. This is not to argue that in this case time was not required to study all aspects of the problem but to show how things can be held up. It also emphasizes that, contrary to general myth, the honorary officers of the Society cannot easily force through their own views, however much they felt them necessary for the good of the Society, by presenting Committees with *faits accomplis* drawn up after all night sessions "oiled by carafes of red wine".

Although the proposal to move the unedited Proceedings of meetings from the *Biochemical Journal* was defeated at a General Meeting in 1967 the problem still worried the Committee. This enhanced the growing belief that a publication complementing the *Biochemical Journal* was needed to cover satisfactorily the expanding activities of the Society and the increasing developments in Biochemistry itself as well as to provide members with the service they deserved.

In July 1969 the Committee asked the Advisory Committee for Publications (ACP) to consider a feasibility study on a new 'Transactions Like' journal, in spite of reservations made by the members representing the Editorial Board. The feasibility sub-committee set up by the ACP made detailed recommendations based on a paper by Dr D. C. Watts. These proposals were accepted and presented to the Committee with a strong recommendation for action by the then Chairman of the ACP in November 1969. The main proposals were that *Biochemical Society Transactions* should be sold with the *Biochemical Journal* but be free to members of the Society; it would contain expanded reports on Society and Group colloquia, free communications (unedited) to Society meetings, short (edited) communications, as well as special lectures. It was also suggested that the length of the communications be increased to 600 words and that they be reported in Agenda Papers only as 60 word abstracts. Again, a new worry which arose was the possibility of 'double publication'. However, the most powerful objections by the Editorial Board were that edited 'short communications' should occur together with unedited free communications and that the former should be moved from the *Biochemical Journal*. Technical problems as to who should do the scientific editing were also raised. Inevitably the matter was referred back once again to the ACP. Following further discussions the ACP were told by the Committee in July 1970 to press on with the arrangements for publication of *Biochemical Society Transactions*, but in October 1970 it was agreed to put the proposal to an A.G.M. There things rested until the 1971 A.G.M., when the idea was accepted but with the suggestion that implementation should be delayed for a year. By March 1972 a Managing Editor for *BST*, Professor R. B. Beechey (Fig. 6.12), was appointed and after much labour and frustration he launched the first issue in



Fig. 6.12. Professor R. B. Beechey. First Managing Editor of *Biochemical Society Transactions*, 1972–1976.

April 1973. The journal was well received and the decision to distribute it free to members was an excellent idea from many points of view, not least for the wide publicity that ensued (see Chapter 4). However, it soon became clear that it was not financially feasible to continue to distribute *BST* free to members and from 1974 members received the journal only if they subscribed to it. The total number of subscriptions started at around 2200 and this was maintained until 1980, when with the general recession the numbers began to fall (see Chapter 4). As with the *Biochemical Journal*, the subscription group which maintained its numbers were the U.K. subscribers; the biggest drop on the other hand were U.K. members, down some 64%. The percentage drop in overseas member subscriptions over the same period was, in contrast, 47%. Perhaps this reflects once more the relative support given to science in the U.K. compared with elsewhere.

In 1977 Dr D. C. Watts took over the Managing Editorship of *BST* and at the time of writing remains in charge. He provided some personal comments on this period and they give an authentic flavour of problems encountered and overcome. He writes (a slightly shortened version of his original manuscript):

“Having retired from the Editorial Board of the *Biochemical Journal* in 1974 it came as both a surprise and a challenge to take over as Managing Editor of *BST* in 1977. Brian Beechey had the journal in good shape with an overwhelming amount of copy and reviews commissioned into the foreseeable future. All I had to do was sit back and let it all happen! The honeymoon was short-lived. Within the year the news broke that *BJ*, *BST* and the Society were all drifting into the red and I found myself on the receiving end of a string of letters from Rex Dawson [Honorary Publications Secretary, 1973–1980, Plate 4B] demanding financial economies in publication costs. Nothing could be done about existing copy and proposals took the general form of “going quarterly” and cutting the communications back to the old 400 words. I opposed both of these proposals as sounding the death knell for *BST* and bought time by going back to the drawing board to examine every aspect of production. This resulted in the new format, something I had long desired, and a new rigorous code of conditions for submitting communications with charges for more than one Figure or Table and the minimization of proof corrections, which imposed a substantial bill from the printers. At the same time we were able to go from letterpress to offset printing which, with a change in the paper to that used by the *BJ*, enabled us to include halftones in the text and small improvements in presentation such as having a picture of the Special Lecturer at the beginning of his account. At this time also the first hint of the world recession became apparent; nevertheless *BST* remained in the black and made a modest profit.

“A major problem in managing *BST* is trying to keep the page number approximately constant and to the estimate. I have no control over the major component, communications, but can

restrict or encourage colloquium reports and commission or omit review material. There is no doubt the Colloquia and special lectures sell *BST* and I have always felt that for too long it has been necessary to restrict the wrong part of the contents. It was a pleasure to encourage more and longer colloquia when the communications showed a substantial decrease in number following an increase in the annual subscription. The last year (1985–1986), however, has seen a number of factors that have resulted in meetings being larger than ever before. The publishing boom may subside, otherwise I may yet find *BST* under fire again to cut production costs in some way (publication of each communication costs about £50, but the right to publish almost unlimited communications seems to have become part of Society tradition).

“Part of my reorganization was to establish a regular publication schedule. This enabled *BST* to be included in *Current Contents*. The financial squeeze on *Current Contents* resulted in *BST* being discarded with the offer that we could be included in the new *Transactions Contents* — an unattractive publication that covers a wide diversity of topics. A long exchange of letters finally resulted in our being readmitted to *CC* but at the expense of modifying the contents list to exclude communications. All communications are abstracted by *Chemical Abstracts* and so should be thrown up by a computer search that uses *Chemical Abstracts* as a literature base. I subsequently discovered that many journals modified their contents pages to comply with the requirements of *Current Contents*.

“Members rightly demand the shortest possible publication time but this does cause problems in relation to the organization of Society meetings. Recent changes introduced by Roy Burdon [Honorary Meetings Secretary 1981–1985, Plate 4B] have changed both the number and timing of meetings, which, in turn, have altered the magnitude of the attendance over and above those outlined above. I now anticipate two large meetings per annum, Christmas and the A.G.M. Time-tabling the publication of these to span two issues each of *BST* has enabled me to hold to my publication schedule and minimize the delay between meeting and publication — by next year a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 7.5 months. During Roy’s experimental period, coupled with the publishing boom, publication delay went up to nearly a year. *BST*, contrary to what some members think, has never been a quick publication journal; the inclusion of proofs for authors has prevented that. (We have discussed eliminating proofs on many occasions but it always emerges that scientific accuracy would suffer considerably if we did so, and with now only a small financial saving.) I make these points to indicate the intricate inter-relationship between Society organization and running *BST*.”

6.6 *Bioscience Reports*

The failure to start a rapid publication journal in the late 'sixties still worried the Publications Board well into the 'eighties, as did the possibility of producing a journal more

directly concerned with molecular biology than is the *Biochemical Journal*. In fact a proposal to start a journal 'Cell Genetics' was pursued as far as collecting the names for a possible editorial board. However, the idea was vetoed and there eventually emerged, rather suddenly, what was probably a compromise idea ('Gene Expression' was also suggested) — *Bioscience Reports*. At the main committee meeting on 29 November 1979 the recommendation of the Publications and the Finance Boards that a Rapid Communication Journal be launched was approved. £75,000 [£110,000] was set aside to start the venture and Professor C. A. Pasternak was asked to become the Managing Editor and provide a feasibility study. The completion of the feasibility study was reported at the Committee and the go-ahead was given for a start in January 1981 within the recommended budget (the feasibility study proposed a higher figure). The journal was to be called *Bioscience Reports* and would print communications and reports in molecular and cellular biology. A prestigious international Editorial Board was quickly appointed and an office was set up in St George's Hospital Medical School so as to be free from the constraints of an increasingly busy Editorial Office in Warwick Court. In spite of sterling efforts by the Editor the journal was not a success. It was launched with a subscription rate fixed on full economic costings with minimum circulation. Dr Rex Dawson, Chairman of the Publications Board at the time, writes: "Some of us believed that it should have been wedded to the *Biochemical Journal* for some time with it being given to the *BJ* subscribers as a free bonus for at least six months with the subscription rate adjusted to a level which would attract long-term subscribers. In fact the accountants won ...". It will be recalled that the ploy of giving *Biochemical Society Transactions* free for one year to *Biochemical Journal* subscribers paid off handsomely in the long run.

The number of original subscribers to *Bioscience Reports* were counted in the low hundreds and were obviously never in the foreseeable future going to reach 1000, the calculated break-even point. In spite of one or two attractive contributions in the form of manuscripts of Nobel Lectures, contributions were slow in arriving, and the financial loss was becoming too large to be justified as a service to the Society or even to Biochemistry in general. Eventually, on the recommendation of the Publications Board, the Committee decided to cut its losses and signed a contract with Plenum Press, who took over the copyright of the Journal for ten years on what could be considered as favourable terms for the Society. It was hoped that the back-up of a large organization with great experience in scientific publishing and particularly in promotion will allow the journal to establish itself as essential biological reading. The Board of Editors as well as the format will

remain the same and the interests of the Society will be represented by the Publications Secretary, who at the time of the transfer was the late Dr G. B. Ansell (Fig. 6.13).

A combination of unpropitious circumstances conspired from the start to put the viability of the new journal at risk. The problems included (i) the overall international depression in science funding at the time of launch, which must have deterred potential new subscribers, (ii) the unexpected ability of the current journals to absorb most of the high quality copy coming forward and (iii) an expensive method of setting used in a laudable attempt to achieve rapid publication.

6.7 *Essays in Biochemistry*

One of the first proposals which the newly formed Advisory Committee for Publications had to consider in 1962–1963 was that an annual soft back *Essays in Biochemistry* should be published. The aim was to provide essays “which could be read with pleasure and profit by senior students and lecturers in Biochemistry. Each essay (would present) an overall view of one aspect of the subject, indicating its origin, present status and likely future development”. A positive recommendation to the main Committee was accepted and in September 1963 Professor P. N. Campbell (Plate 1B) and the late Dr G. D. Greville were appointed editors. The launching of *Essays* was, however, not without incident. Dr M. G. MacFarlane, on being invited to provide a contribution for the first volume, replied by pointing out that in her opinion the Committee did not have the power to publish such a series without approval of a General Meeting of the Society. The rule (13) which she quoted specifically referred to publication of a “journal”; the Committee did not see *Essays* as a journal and the Symposia series was quoted as a precedent. However, it was agreed to take the proposal to the A.G.M. in September 1964. The proposal was carried (26–19; once again it is obvious that an important decision was made on a very small number of votes) and the first volume published by the Academic Press appeared in 1965; it was extremely successful: by 1968 over 7000 copies had been sold and in his Preface to the tenth volume Professor Campbell recorded that over 60,000 copies of the first nine volumes had been sold. The pricing policy agreed at the A.G.M. at which the project was approved, was that the volumes should be financially within the reach of students, whilst not losing money for the Society. This has been achieved throughout the existence of *Essays*, although sales have dropped markedly in recent years. Apart from the general recession in book sales this drop reflects once again the consequence of the highly specialized nature of modern Biochemistry. One cannot expect many Biochemistry students with an immediate interest in only one out of four essays



Fig. 6.13. Dr G. B. Ansell, Honorary Publications Secretary, 1980–1986 (deceased 21 November 1986).

buying a volume three-quarters of which is of no direct interest or quite frequently almost unintelligible to them. The guiding force of *Essays* for many years was Professor Campbell, who served from 1965 until 1985. The late Professor F. Dickens (Plate 1A) was a particularly effective co-editor from 1970, after Dr Greville's untimely death, until 1974.

An interesting aspect of *Essays* is that it has continued to be published by Academic Press although the Society has taken over many other publishing activities it has initiated. A possible change in publisher was considered in 1985 when Academic Press moved its London office to the U.S.A., but the Committee decided in December 1985 to continue in the same way, following some assurances for the future by the Press.

6.8 *Essays in Medical Biochemistry*

The proposal brought in 1970 before the Advisory Committee on Publications for the introduction of a new title in the *Essay* form, *Essays in Medical Biochemistry*, was eventually accepted after a working party reported positively, and the first volume appeared in 1974. However, the series was not as financially successful as expected in spite of good reviews. Increased biochemical specialization was again one of the reasons for the poor performance and, following poor support from subscribers, the Society reluctantly decided in 1979 to discontinue the venture with volume 4.

6.9 Biochemical Society Symposia

The events leading to the establishment of the Society Symposia and the decision to publish the proceedings of the meetings, together with their development to the present day, have already been described in Chapter 3.

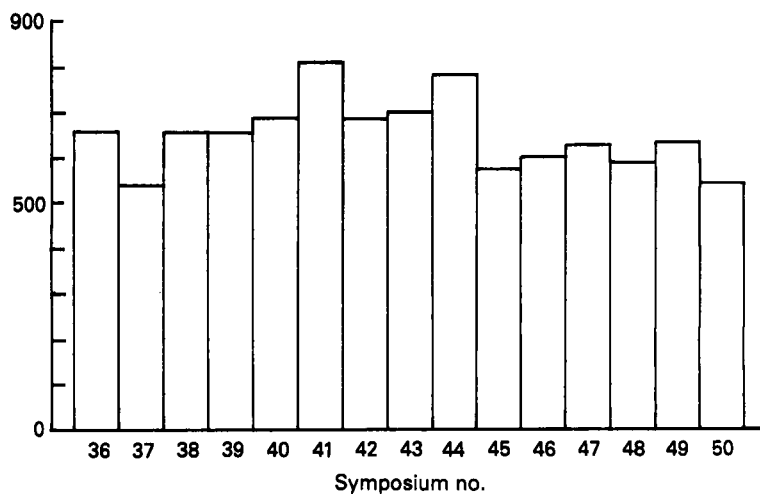


Fig. 6.14. Pattern of sales of Biochemical Society Symposia (nos. 36-50, 1973-1985) at the end of the first year of publication.

The publication of Symposia was in the early days in the hands of the C.U.P. but was transferred to Academic Press in 1964, when the formation was changed from softback to hardback. The Society took over full responsibility for their publication in 1971. Sales have always been satisfactory but never in the same league as *Essays in Biochemistry*. Recently, in common with all the Society's publications, sales are decreasing. Financially the series just manages to keep in balance (if overheads are disregarded) but, as with *Essays*, the series is considered to be mainly a service to members and not merely a money spinner. It will be remembered that shortened reports of *Group Colloquia*, as distinct from *Society Symposia*, are reported in *Transactions*.

The pattern of sales of Symposia over the years is recorded in Fig. 6.14.

6.10 *Biochemical Society Bulletin*

The origins of this publication have been described in Chapter 3. It is now well established as the Society's House Journal and currently each issue contains some 50 pages consisting *inter alia* of short articles of topical interest, Society news and meeting arrangements. A good indication of its scope is given by the contents list of a typical issue. Table 6.2 records such a list for the Bulletin of August 1985, which was issued for a meeting of the Society held in Belfast in September. The Abstracts of communications for a meeting are now contained in a separate booklet which is distributed with the appropriate issue of the *Bulletin*. Currently the Honorary Officers are making great efforts to improve and widen the general appeal of this membership publication.

6.11 Special (Occasional) Publications

Because of the difficulties of entering the book publishing sphere, outlined earlier in this chapter, the number of publications which can be considered booklets or books which the Society has published is small. A very strong special case has to be made before the Publications Board recommends publication, and even then it has to surmount the hurdles of the Finance Committee and Main Committee. The titles which have been issued over the years include: *Biochemistry, Molecular Biology and Biological Sciences*, a report of a sub-committee under Sir Hans Krebs set up to consider the Kendrew report (H.M.S.O. Comd. 3675) on Molecular Biology; *Safety in Biological Laboratories* (1978, reprinted), *Writing a Scientific Paper* (1979, reprinted) by V. H. Booth, the most successful of the Special Publications with over 15,000 of the first edition sold.

Conscious of the increasing importance of chemical education at school level the Society instigated the writing of a

Table 6.2. Contents of *Biochemical Society Bulletin* vol. 7, no. 3, 1985

Bulletin Articles	The International Biochemical Science Federation of European Biochemical Societies
Editorial	Belfast Meeting
Why Public Relations?	Arrangements and Programme
Scientific Procedures on Living Animals	Classified Advertisements
Award Winners 1985	Forthcoming Meetings
The Society's Staff	Society Main Meetings
Biochemistry at Queen's University, Belfast	Group Meetings
FEBS Activities	Refresher Courses
Krebs Memorial Scholarship 1985-86	Harden Conferences
Members' Correspondence	Free Communications
Special Colloquia	Instructions to Authors
Biochemical Society News	Diary of Events
The Society's Regional Group Structure	Announcements
<i>The Biochemical Journal</i>	Earthquake Damage to the University of Chile
The Society's 1985 Medals and Awards	ISN/ASN Joint Meeting, Venezuela, 1987
Grants and Fellowships	Reservation/Registration Forms
Membership Subscription	Belfast Meeting 24-27
News of Members	September 1985
New Members	London Meeting 18-20
	December 1985
	Peptide and Protein Group Meeting
	Form of Nomination for Membership
Centre pull-out supplement: 615th Meeting (Belfast) Schedule	

text-book for schools: *Introducing Biochemistry* by E. J. Wood and W. R. Pickering (the latter a practising school teacher). This was published commercially by John Murray in 1982 but its production was monitored academically and aided at all stages by the Society and can be, by stretching a point, considered a Special Publication of the Society.

Such a collaborative venture with a publisher was an important departure for the Society because for the first time the idea was introduced that its logo could be used as a seal of approval to promote a venture which was essentially financed elsewhere. This seal of approval has now been extended to a series of teaching discs for the BBC micro computer, published by IRL Ltd., but carefully monitored by the Society throughout their production.

It should be noted here that one video produced by the Society has already been published and that in order to encourage the making of films and videos in schools on life

science subjects the Society now offers a series of awards at the Biennial National Schools Film and Video Festival.

6.12 The Future

The financial stability of the Society as we know it today, with elaborate free meetings, generous travel grants and a low annual member's subscription rate, is obviously based on the continuing success of the *Biochemical Journal*. There is no reason to believe that this situation will not obtain for some time to come but one is also aware of ongoing, vast technological (electronic) changes in the printing and communications industry. Soon authors may be asking to submit their papers on disc and will expect the editing and processing to be carried out electronically. This could mean that eventually a 'soft' version of the *Journal* would be available at the authors' own computer terminals. This development, unless prudently handled, would undoubtedly increase costs and reduce circulation and, probably, revenue. The Society Committee is well aware of such possibilities and its financial policy is designed to ensure long-term stability with appropriate investments (see Chapter 4).

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