

Editorial comment – The impact of Impact Factors and *Parasitology*

During each year there are specific events in the calendar which remind you that the time is passing and if nothing else you are now a year older. One such for journal editors is the publication by Thomson Reuters of their most recent calculation of Impact Factors (IFs). One permanent item on the meeting of editorial boards of journals such as *Parasitology*, is the IF of the journal. Editors and their editorial boards are, at the very least, hoping that the IF of the journal has been sustained and equally their relative position in the league table of IFs of their 'competitor' journals. It was, therefore, with some alarm and disappointment at the end of June that the Thomson Reuters' list gave the latest Impact Factor (for 2009 data) of *Parasitology* as **1·607**, a significant drop from **2·071** the previous year. Such was this apparent decline that we felt that there was a mistake and therefore, Gavin Swanson from the publishers, Cambridge University Press, checked the data which Thomson Reuters had used in calculating our IF. He found a serious error and was able to ask them to recalculate the IF for *Parasitology*. Thomson Reuters have now recalculated IFs for journals where errors were suspected or identified and the revised database was updated at the end of September. The corrected IF for *Parasitology* is **2·316** and not only represents a rise from 2009 but is in fact the highest for the journal, at least since 1996. The journal also rose in the ranks, to position 8 out of 28 journals in the subject category.

We know that IF does indeed impact on who chooses to publish in a journal, not least in the context in the UK of the research assessment

exercises across the university sector, and for cases for promotion. *Parasitology* aims to continue the steady rise in its IF since 2004 and against increased competition. Each editorial board meeting discusses the IF and strategies which might be followed to sustain or increase the IF. Throughout its 101 years *Parasitology* has always had a policy of publishing across the broadest range of the subject and thereby providing an outlet for the work of all parasitologists, whatever branch of our subject they research. Our editorial board recognizes that this broad approach to selecting papers for publication will mean we publish some papers of high scholarship but which will be poorly cited and with a lesser effect on the IF than others. A more selective approach of papers to be published by the editors will undoubtedly promote a rise in IF but would represent a change in a policy pursued for more than a century. We may be reluctantly pushed in this direction. At the last editorial board meeting at ICOPA (August 2010), some of the members present were advising us thus. We have to strike the correct balance of serving the parasitology community while advancing the journal in increasingly competitive times.

Readers will have noted that Review articles and Special Issues that are dedicated to sets of related review papers on hot topics in parasitology are routine features of *Parasitology*. We plan to publish more review articles in the future, and would be pleased to hear from any authors who might be interested in contributing one. Please send an outline to any of the editors for consideration.

Stephen Phillips – Senior Editor