

EDITORIAL

New initiatives and developments at JEB

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Community survey

In 2016, JEB's publisher, The Company of Biologists, conducted a community survey to help set its publishing priorities for all five of its journals. We were pleased with the high number of responses from people identifying themselves as JEB authors, readers and reviewers and for the many positive comments we received, emphasising how members of the experimental biology community consider JEB to be 'their' journal. Although our survey showed that speed from acceptance to publication in JEB is considered to be the same or better than that of our competitors, speed was clearly the area that the majority of survey respondents deemed to be most important in terms of our ongoing priorities and it was rated higher than, for example, introducing new online features such as graphical abstracts, annotation of PDFs, publishing reviewer reports and post-publication commenting.

Speed of publication and continuous publication

In response to the survey results, we have worked hard to reduce the time from the date an article is accepted to it being posted on our website as an author manuscript – from an average of 16 days in 2015 to an average of 7 days in 2017. From January 2018, we also aim to reduce the time to an accepted article being published as a 'version of record' by moving to a continuous publication model. In practice, continuous publication means that as soon as an article is ready to be published it is immediately released online rather than waiting for other articles in the issue to be completed. The 'issue in progress' builds gradually, with articles being added to the contents list as soon as they are ready and the most recent articles appearing at the top of the relevant section. Unlike some of the other journals that publish their papers using this model (e.g. eLife), JEB will continue to package its content into twice-monthly journal issues and, on around the 1st and 15th of each month, the issue in progress will close and become the 'latest complete issue'. Links to both the issue in progress and the latest complete issue are available on the journal home page and under the 'Articles' tab on the drop-down menu bar. JEB will continue to publish 24 issues of research papers per year but, from 2018, we will also be publishing a 25th supplemental issue of Review articles based on our annual symposium.

Continuous publication should not only make it faster for authors to get their research published but also make research available to the wider community as quickly as possible. Readers will now have even more flexibility in the alerts they receive and can sign up to receive daily updates, weekly updates or just an update when each issue closes. They can also be notified when one of our subject collections is updated: current subject collections relate to 'Biomechanics of movement', 'Neuroethology' and 'Ecophysiology: responses to environmental stressors and

change'. Alert preferences can be updated at <http://jeb.biologists.org/alerts>. Given the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) by the European Union (see <http://www.biologists.com/what-is-gdpr/> for more details), we would also urge members of the community to sign up for news alerts at <http://www.biologists.com/subscribe/> to ensure that they are kept up-to-date on any other journal news, such as calls for papers, new subject collections and upcoming special issues.

For more information on continuous publication, please see our FAQs page (<http://jeb.biologists.org/content/continuous-publication>).

Easier submissions

If you have not submitted a manuscript to JEB recently, you will notice that we have introduced a few changes to make manuscript submission as quick and easy as possible.

First, if you have already deposited your manuscript in bioRxiv (the preprint server hosted by Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory), you can submit your paper directly from bioRxiv to JEB through a simple transfer portal, avoiding the need to re-enter information or re-upload files. (Alternatively, if you wish to post your preprint on bioRxiv after submission to JEB, it is simply a matter of clicking a few checkboxes within the JEB submission system.) Similarly, JEB's partnership with the Dryad data repository means that authors can simultaneously submit their data packages at the time of manuscript submission, allowing data to be made securely available to referees and then automatically made public, if and when the paper is published.

To further facilitate manuscript submission, we have reduced the amount of additional information authors need to provide at first submission; so, as long as the text and figures are easily viewable by reviewers and the article meets our length guidelines (see below), we only ask for information that is necessary to confirm the identities of the authors. Our format-free submission policy also means that authors do not have to adhere to journal formatting guidelines when they first submit a manuscript for peer review. Of course, these two initiatives do mean that other requirements, such as correct file formats and sizes, funding information and submission checklists, are now requested at the revision stage – but, at this point, over 95% of manuscripts go on to be accepted for publication.

Materials and methods

As part of the introduction of format-free submission – which has been in place since early 2017 – we have removed the Materials and methods section from the word count of research papers. Given the uniqueness of some of the methodologies reported in JEB, we think it's important to allow authors the space they need to describe their methods in sufficient detail and for readers to fully understand and replicate the experiments conducted. We have received many positive comments since introducing these new author initiatives, and JEB submissions increased by 15% last year.

Peer review

Unbiased, independent peer review is at the heart of our publishing decisions and is one of the ways that we, as a journal, provide added

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value to the research papers that are submitted to us. As a community journal, JEB enjoys a loyal base of reviewers who spend substantial amounts of their academic and free time reviewing for JEB. This is increasingly important given the recent proliferation of predatory publishers and journals. As always, we would like to

thank our reviewers, Editorial Board members and Monitoring Editors for their time and expertise in reading and reviewing submissions for JEB and maintaining the high standard of research published in the journal (see Supplementary Information for a full list of reviewers in 2017).