

nature chemical biology

Plus ça change

Although we are updating the formats of our original research papers, publishing top-quality chemical biology research remains our primary aim.

In assembling each issue of *Nature Chemical Biology*, the editorial team collaborates with authors and referees to identify the highest quality original research and commentary in chemical biology. We also work closely with authors of accepted manuscripts to ensure that published papers are as concise as possible and are written for a general audience of chemical biologists. This month we are announcing several changes that we believe will enhance our ability to achieve these goals.

Since the launch of the journal, *Nature Chemical Biology* has published original research contributions in three formats: Brief Communications, Letters and Articles. Though each content type includes high-quality papers of broad interest, Brief Communications report concise studies, whereas Letters describe research of intermediate scope and Articles contain in-depth investigations. Despite the flexibility of these three content types, these multiple options have, in practice, introduced unnecessary complexity for authors. Based on feedback from the community, we have decided to discontinue the publication of Letters to *Nature Chemical Biology*. Effective with the January 2008 issue, we will publish original research contributions as Brief Communications or Articles. To accommodate this change, we have updated our guidelines to provide two clearly defined formats for research papers in *Nature Chemical Biology*.

Brief Communications will continue to report concise studies of broad interest and immediate importance. In response to author feedback, we have expanded the length available in Brief Communications. Beginning in 2008, Brief Communications may occupy up to three printed pages in the journal and include two display items (figures, schemes or tables). We believe that these expanded Brief Communications offer a convenient format to publish both new chemical biology tools that have wide applicability and focused studies of immediate importance that can be concisely reported.

Articles will include in-depth investigations of high quality and broad interest. Starting in January, Articles may occupy four to ten printed pages in the journal and contain up to eight display items. We anticipate that Articles will report detailed studies of significant interest to experts in the field while communicating groundbreaking results that have broad appeal to the diverse audience of *Nature Chemical Biology*.

The editorial team continues to believe that scientific communication is best served through concise and direct prose, independent of the format of the paper. At the time of acceptance, the editors will consider which format (Brief Communication or Article) will best convey the content and advances of the manuscript. Once a decision about format has been made, the editors will work with authors to ensure that their paper is as brief as possible and that its key ideas are accessible to both the expert and the general reader.

Though the new policy takes effect in January, we have already implemented several changes. First, to aid authors as they prepare future submissions, we have updated our Guide to Authors to include

detailed descriptions of the changes to research formats (http://www.nature.com/nchembio/authors/article_types/index.html). Second, we have reconfigured our online manuscript tracking system to accept submissions of Brief Communications and Articles, but not Letters. Authors who currently have Letters under consideration at the journal will receive more information from the editors during the transition.

In addition to updating the journal's content types, we are modifying how we handle Supplementary Information (SI) in the online versions of our papers. Although the scientific community's increasing output of SI has come under criticism (*Nature* **449**, 24, 2007; see also NPG's author blog, *Nautilus*: http://blogs.nature.com/nautilus/2007/09/papers_should_not_need_supp.html), SI helps authors to write concise papers that focus on the central storyline while presenting additional information that expands the study. In the past, authors have provided individual SI files (for example, Supplementary Methods) that readers could access through web links in the published paper. Because accessing numerous files online is cumbersome, many referees, authors and readers have expressed a preference for a single downloadable SI file. Though video and audio files will continue to be provided as individual files, we and the other Nature journals are now including SI figures, schemes, tables and text in a single PDF that is published with the paper. We encourage authors to provide these single PDF files, presented as they would like them to appear online, at each stage of manuscript submission.

The final change is related to how we handle statements of competing financial interests (CFI). Earlier this year, we reported on the updated CFI policy at Nature journals, which requires that authors of original research and commissioned articles provide a CFI declaration (*Nat. Chem. Biol.* **3**, 185, 2007). In the past, this policy was implemented by including a statement in published papers that indicated whether or not the authors declared a conflict. Though our policy of requiring authors to declare potential conflicts remains unchanged, we are modifying how we present CFI. Specifically, readers should note that the absence of a CFI statement in any *Nature Chemical Biology* paper means that the authors have completed a CFI form and that they have declared that they have no competing interests. Papers by authors who report a CFI will be handled as they are currently: the published article will include a short statement indicating that a potential conflict exists, and a detailed declaration will appear in the online version of the paper. We believe that this new approach, which is being applied across all Nature journals, offers a clear and concise method to communicate CFI statements.

Independent of the classification of our papers or how policies are implemented at the journal, authors and readers can be confident that maintaining the high quality and broad interest of the content in *Nature Chemical Biology* remains our highest priority. ■