

How are we doing so far?

As *Nature Materials* celebrates its first anniversary, we look back at what the journal has achieved so far, how it might develop in the future, and the service we can provide to the materials community. From the start, our editorial view has been that materials research is fundamentally and increasingly an interdisciplinary science. We believe that the common goal of understanding why materials behave the way they do, how they are made and how new ones can be designed, should transcend the wide arrays of preparation and characterization techniques and jargon used by many of its practitioners.

To reflect this view, we aim to publish papers that are not only influential within their own disciplines, but are of broad interest to many chemists, physicists, engineers and biologists. For this reason, the scope of this journal includes all aspects of materials science and engineering, as well as more fundamental and theoretical aspects of condensed-matter physics and chemistry that are aimed at understanding the nature and behaviour of materials at the macro-, meso- and atomic scales.

This month, for instance, the topics covered in our papers range from the *in vitro* observation of contractility in plant proteins (page 600) to the discovery of a family of intermetallic compounds exhibiting high ductility at room temperature (page 587). We also aim to give due exposure to new or fast-growing areas of research, such as molecular electronics, optoelectronics, semiconductor and superconductor physics, microfluidics, catalysis and granular materials.

Looking beyond our pages, it is increasingly clear that the boundaries between the traditional disciplines are merging at the nanoscale in an attempt to develop materials and devices whose composition and structure can be controlled and specified at the smallest scales, so as to convey useful properties at all length scales. The recent European Materials Research Society meeting in Strasbourg (see the Commentary on page 563), is just one example of the current desire among researchers to form an increasingly detailed understanding of the phenomena and processes observed at the nanoscale, and take advantage of their scientific and technological potential.

Regular readers will note that we follow the nanoscale revolution closely, and in particular the interface between nanotechnology and biological processes where much rapid progress is being made — see the article on page 577 reviewing the latest developments in the use of genetically engineered proteins for the assembly of functional inorganic nanostructures. Yet despite the impressive advances in nanofabrication, the precision and efficiency of biological systems remain unrivalled, and their integration in synthetic nanoscale devices is becoming increasingly appealing. Therefore, it will become more and more important for materials scientists to talk to biologists, and for chemist and physicists to be aware of the latest developments in biomedical research. We hope to provide a forum for such interactions, and we welcome submissions in these areas from researchers who are interested in communicating their findings to a broad audience.

Finally, each month we publish articles that examine wider issues, including the interface between art and science (July 2003 issue, page 427), concerns raised by the European Union funding policies (February 2003 issue, pages 65 and 67) and the increasing importance of patents (December 2002 issue, pages 197 and 199). A rash of reports in the media about public fears surrounding nanotechnology suggests that researchers have a growing responsibility to communicate with the wider public about the impact of their work. *Nature Materials* is one of many forums for such debates, and we strongly encourage the community to contribute to the journal in the form of Commentaries, News and Views, and Correspondence (about matters arising from previous issues).

How far we have succeeded in integrating all these fields and topics and making our papers accessible to the widest possible range of scientists is, of course, for our readers to judge. But the feedback we have received so far suggests that our multidisciplinary approach is welcomed by the community. We are also encouraged by the fact that we consistently receive almost ten times as many papers as we can publish, and we are grateful that so many authors have risked submitting their work to a new and unproven journal.

As we enter our second year, we hope that our readers continue to share our enthusiasm for this field and enjoy following its growth with us.

AS WE CELEBRATE ONE YEAR
IN PRINT, WE REFLECT ON
WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED
SO FAR, AND WHERE WE HOPE
TO GO NEXT.

