

Electronic improvements

Thanks to the technology wizards at Nature Publishing Group and the software developers at E-Journal Press, *Nature Immunology* will be officially launching Electronic Submission as of 24 June 2002. We have been busy testing the software for months and are finally about ready to roll it out. If you are familiar with the system used by *Nature Cell Biology*, you will feel right at home uploading your manuscripts to the *Nature Immunology* system. We will be providing to authors and referees the convenience and speed of a completely electronic manuscript handling process, with access from individualized homepages.

Electronic submission is rapidly becoming the norm in the publishing industry. A few years ago it was virtually nonexistent (at least for immunologists); now it is offered by almost half of the top 15 immunology journals. By the end of the summer, all the Nature Research Journals should have complete electronic review systems up and running.

This trend benefits authors, referees and editors. Authors will be able to submit their manuscripts without the hassle of making multiple copies or paying for those beautiful glossy images. Dependence on variably reliable postal and express mail services will become a thing of the past. Because almost every lab has an Internet connection, web submission of manuscripts should reduce the costs associated with publication. An added benefit is that it is "environmentally correct"; manuscripts will only be printed if it is essential, cutting down on paper wastage. And then there's the portability factor. Busy referees traveling to meetings will be able to load up their laptop, rather than their briefcases, with files (this is our small contribution to improving the lot of the intrepid scientific speaker on the lecture circuit).

The editorial process should take less time because of instantaneous access over the Internet. Not only will papers arrive in our editorial offices faster, but also we will be able to get them into the hands of reviewers as soon as they agree to review. Another feature of this system is that referees can add their reports directly to the database. Reviews are pasted into the appropriate spot on a simple form that marks comments for either the editor's or author's attention. This system will make the review process even more efficient.

The *Nature Immunology* homepage will sport a new icon leading directly to electronic submission. From there, authors and referees will be guided through the process. If you are not registered with the *Nature*

Immunology manuscript database (this is different from being a registered user or subscriber to the journal), you will be asked to do so before you can submit or review a paper. Every registered user will have a homepage from which they can submit or check the status of their own manuscripts, download papers to be refereed, or upload their reviews.

The new system is linked to a changeover in the internal database system that *Nature Immunology* uses to keep track of manuscripts. When we convert to the new system, everyone with an e-mail address in our old database will be automatically registered and assigned a username and password in the new system. For security reasons, it is highly recommended that all individuals in our database log into the system at least once to change their passwords. To minimize any possible compromise of confidentiality, we will be sending an e-mail reminder out as soon as the system is ready.

Obviously, when our internal staff first adopt the new system on 17 June, there will be many authors who already have manuscripts moving through the editorial process. For these papers, we ask that revisions and correspondence still be handled outside of the electronic system. We want to avoid situations in which manuscripts fall through the cracks because records are split between the two systems. From 17–21 June, *Nature Immunology* staff will enter new submissions into the electronic system (as a final test) and start to use the system for electronic reviewing. As of Monday, 24 June, authors will be able to access the electronic submission site through the *Nature Immunology* homepage.

In the past, we have had a separate presubmission form for those of you who are inquiring about the suitability of prospective submissions. We now ask that you submit these *via* our electronic submission site (either from our homepage or from our Guide to Authors), and indicate that this is a presubmission inquiry. This choice simplifies your efforts by reducing the number of "required fields" that need to be filled out, compared to the requirements when actually submitting a manuscript. If in our reply we encourage you to submit the full manuscript, we will be able to add to your homepage a link that will take you directly to your partially filled out submission form, streamlining the process.

We hope that you will find electronic manuscript review efficient and useful. Please let us know what you do and don't like about it, so that we can prioritize future improvements.