

Celebrating the 80th anniversary of *Antonie van Leeuwenhoek*: a special issue

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It is my great pleasure to introduce the Special Issue that we have compiled to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of the journal *Antonie van Leeuwenhoek* and to look back over the journal's more recent history, notably since the 50th Anniversary in 1984, when the origins of the journal and its historic link to the then Netherlands Society for Microbiology (since 2011, the Koninklijke Nederlandse Vereniging voor Microbiologie [Royal Netherlands Society for Microbiology]) were reviewed by the Professor Adriaan Fuchs, the Editor-in-Chief (Fuchs 1984). Since that time, the journal has had five Editor-in-Chief's (Table 1) and has expanded its output from one volume each year to two volumes. Greater internationalisation of the journal's profile is now apparent: whereas the first half century relied almost exclusively on Editors from the Netherlands (Fuchs 1984), the Editors and Editorial Board members are now distributed worldwide, although we are pleased to retain our link to the KNVM through the presence of its chair, Professor Han Wösten, as an Editor. In 1997, Professor Mike Goodfellow became the first Editor-in-Chief from outside the Netherlands and helped consolidate the journal's longstanding relationship with the communities of scientists working on Actinobacteria and on

microbial systematics. Appropriately, in this anniversary year, the journal has published a study by Prof Goodfellow and colleagues that proposes naming a novel streptomycete in recognition of van Leeuwenhoek (Busarakam et al. 2014).

The journal has refined its Aims and Scope over the years, not least to embrace developments in molecular genetics and genomics, but has remained true to its roots as a journal of general microbiology. Notably, we continue to publish work on both bacteria and eukaryotic microorganisms, and now publish work on archaea. The journal has also kept up with developments in academic publishing enabled by the internet, moving to online submission in 2003 and now offers authors the option of paying for Open Access publication (Springer Open Choice); our Editors can also now 'cascade' manuscripts to the journal SpringerPlus (<http://www.springerplus.com/>). More recently we have moved into the realm of social media, with our Twitter feed (@SpringerMicBio). Looking to the future, it seems likely that social media will play an increasingly important role in disseminating and promoting news of interesting scientific reports.

It is interesting to note that even in 1984, publication metrics such as Impact Factor were being debated (Fuchs 1984) and it is pleasing to report that our Impact Factor appears steady at just over 2 (2012 5 year Impact Factor, 2.04). In this regard, it is important to restate the significance of journals such as *Antonie van Leeuwenhoek*, which provide a repository for the data

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Table 1 Editor-in-Chief's of *Antonie van Leeuwenhoek* since the 50th Anniversary

Editor	Affiliation	Dates
Adriaan Fuchs	Wageningen, Netherlands	1978–1985
Adriaan Stouthamer	Free University, Amsterdam, Netherlands	1985–1996
Mike Goodfellow	University of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK	1997–2003
Iain Sutcliffe	University of Northumbria at Newcastle, UK	2003–2006
Simon Silver	University of Illinois at Chicago, USA	2007–2009
Iain Sutcliffe	University of Northumbria at Newcastle, UK	2009–present

from smaller scale but nevertheless potentially significant scientific studies, often helping authors to establish themselves in particular fields. It is notable that whilst nearly 2,000 papers were published in the first half century of the journal, more than 7,500 papers and reviews have been published since, accumulating more than 50,000 citations. Moreover, our articles are downloaded in total more than 200,000 times per annum. Publication of such work thus remains a valuable service to both authors and the broader scientific community and I thank all of our Editors, past and present, for the excellent assistance they provide to authors during article handling. It is also to the credit of our current Editors that the journal's manuscript handling times remain very competitive.

In this issue, reflecting our historic Dutch roots, we include an appropriately titled article “Still going strong: Leeuwenhoek at eighty” that brings new insights into the scientific contribution made by Antonie van Leeuwenhoek in his later years (Anderson 2014). Other papers in the Special Issue reflect the traditional areas of strength of the journal in publishing studies on the biology of Actinobacteria (including their significance as sources of important secondary metabolites); the ecological significance of microbes, including plant–microbe interactions and microbial interactions as probiotics (reflecting the emerging viewpoint that the ‘microbiome’ represents a new frontier in microbial ecology); and of microbial systematics and phylogeny, including yeast systematics. Systematics has long been an area to which the journal has contributed and in recent years our engagement with this scientific community has

strengthened such that, as noted in the review of Aharon Oren and George Garrity, a significant number of descriptions of new microbial taxa are now published in the journal (Oren and Garrity 2014). We hope that in coming years, *Antonie van Leeuwenhoek* will remain at the forefront of microbial systematics and the Editors are particularly keen to contribute to the transformation of this discipline into a modern genomics-based science, the importance of which is also emphasised in the Special Issue contribution of Vandamme and Peeters (2014). We also hope to encourage submissions with a strong molecular basis, particularly with regard to studies of microbial physiology, ecology and diversity.

After 50 years, Fuchs (1984) concluded that *Antonie van Leeuwenhoek* was “a ‘small’, well established although underestimated journal in contemporary microbiology”. It is pleasing to report that 30 years on, we can draw a similar conclusion, although the continued submission and publication of high quality general interest microbiology means we can now consider the journal less “underestimated” than previously. For this, we thank the authors of the work we publish, our peer reviewers and readers for supporting the journal.

It is a privilege to celebrate our 80th Anniversary with what I am confident is an exciting and stimulating Special Issue. I would like to thank all of the contributors for their efforts and insights in providing the reviews included in the Special Issue.

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