Reflections on passing the baton

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My term of office as Editor-in-Chief of *Diabetologia* comes to an end on 31 December 2020. It has been an eventful 5 years, mostly hugely enjoyable, challenging, rewarding and informative, but occasionally frustrating and annoying! Despite speculation that journals would rapidly become extinct, *Diabetologia* has survived and evolved and grown.

Out of sight, out of mind?

On taking up my post, I quickly realised that the impact factor, which had been relatively stable, was starting to slip, and the number of submissions had begun to decline. The beginning of the drop seemed to coincide with the decision taken by the EASD, for financial reasons, to distribute *Diabetologia* to members electronically rather than in paper format. It seemed highly unlikely in this electronic era that the lack of a print journal would have such a dramatic effect, but no other form of publicity had been substituted. We therefore took simple steps to raise the visibility of the journal. Independently of our publishers, Springer Nature, we designed and brought online a new website (<https://diabetologia-journal.org/>), which I hope you find attractive, informative and easy to navigate. We developed a brief animation to highlight the mission statement of the journal and to introduce our editorial processes (www.youtube.com/watch?v=IR9rS2njW-U). EASD members now receive a weekly electronic table of contents (eTOC) of new online material by email, and EASD members and subscribers to the Springer Nature feed also receive a monthly email describing the complete contents of each issue of *Diabetologia*. All papers now include a Research in Context box, which should highlight the novelty of the work, and a graphical abstract, which summarises the study in a visual nutshell. We have increased our activity on

Twitter (@DiabetologiaJnl), trying to target specific audiences with appropriate information, and now have over 8000 followers. My thanks to all of you who retweet our posts. We arrange a small number of press releases to publicise our publications to the wider general community, and we work with authors' institutional press offices to highlight individual papers. The introduction of special issues, exploring many aspects of one diabetes-related topic in depth, and linked to the *Diabetologia* symposium at the EASD annual scientific meeting, has been well received (see 'Collections' on the *Diabetologia* homepage). There is also now a *Diabetologia* booth at the EASD annual scientific meeting, staffed by members of the Editorial Office.

Measuring impact

In response to these steps to increase visibility, it has been gratifying to see the number of submissions to *Diabetologia* climb back to the previous high levels. We are on course to receive over 2000 submissions in 2020. Our triage rate remains high at >65%, and acceptance rate low at <20%. Despite its flaws, the impact factor is still the most well-known indicator of journal success and I am delighted that it rose substantially in 2018 and 2019 and is now at its highest ever: 7.518. Total citations have increased, as has the 5-year impact factor. However, the impact factor and citations should not be the only metrics on which a journal is judged. Springer Nature is a recent signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (www.sfdora.org), acknowledging their commitment to the need for and usefulness of other measures that summarise the much wider impact of scientific work. Thus, *Diabetologia* is now provided with information on the number of times articles are downloaded (over 3 million downloads in 2019), as a crude measure of interest in and usefulness to the community of a paper. A variety of altmetrics (www.altmetric.com), reflecting the outreach of work beyond the immediate scientific community, are also displayed for all papers.

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Quality and accuracy matter

Recent events during the current COVID-19 pandemic have reinforced the need for thorough, careful assessment of all work prior to publication, even during an emergency. Wrong information is worse than no information. Despite its faults, the peer review process is probably the best system we have. *Diabetologia* has encouraged presentation of draft papers on preprint servers before submission to the journal, in the expectation that authors will use this informal peer review to strengthen their work prior to submission. Only time will tell if this hope is a reality. We now insist that all submissions are accompanied by the most relevant reporting checklist, to ensure that editors, referees and, eventually, readers have all the information they require to assess a paper fairly. We have also taken the lead in introducing a checklist for studies using human islets ([1], <https://diabetologia-journal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Human-islets-checklist-v1.docx>), so that the provenance of the tissue studied is transparent. At first submission, we ask for unmodified immunoblots to be submitted, for scrutiny by editors and referees, and before formal acceptance of a paper, all images undergo forensic examination. For data displayed in histograms, we now ask that individual data points are shown.

Team work

The Editor-in-Chief of *Diabetologia* thankfully does not work in isolation. The load is shared by a team, and as always it is the whole team and the individual team members who make a difference. I have been enormously privileged to work alongside a large number of individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds, all of whom have provided unstinting support for me and for *Diabetologia*. The Editorial Board members, past and present, have been a source of innovation, sound scientific advice and encouragement, and, occasionally, criticism (usually constructive). Our external referees have willingly provided timely reviews, even in the current COVID-19 emergency. *Diabetologia* is well supported by Springer Nature, particularly by our Senior Publishing Editor. The staff and office bearers of EASD have ensured that *Diabetologia* is

an integral part of the society. I am grateful to the Scientific Integrity Panel for their clear analysis of and advice on difficult ethical problems, which sadly seem to come more frequently now. Anyone who has had contact with the journal in any capacity will testify that the current and previous staff of the Editorial Office in Bristol, UK, are exemplary models of courtesy, kindness, helpfulness and efficiency. I never cease to be amazed at their knowledge of editors', authors' and reviewers' pets and hobbies. Somehow, their personal, individualised touch makes reading a disappointing email a pleasure! Their good humour and willingness to help has persisted even as they continue to battle to keep *Diabetologia* on track from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. I will miss the daily updates on Bristol weather, garden produce, progress through karate belts and family updates.

I am indebted to you all.

Passing the baton

I am delighted that Professor Hindrik Mulder has agreed to become the next Editor-in-Chief of *Diabetologia*. Hindrik is a clinically active diabetes researcher from Lund University in Sweden. He is highly experienced in editorial work, previously having served as European and Senior Editor of the *Journal of Endocrinology*, and currently acting as an Associate Editor for *Diabetologia*. He has great ideas on how to develop *Diabetologia* further and I look forward to seeing the journal flourish under his leadership.

References

1. Poitout V, Satin LS, Kahn SE et al (2019) A call for improved reporting of human islet characteristics in research articles. *Diabetologia*. 62(2):209–211. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00125-018-4784-y>

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