



Retirement of Prof Erko Stackebrandt, a Long-Standing Stalwart Advocate of Microbiology, the Editor-in-Chief

Juan A. Mondotte¹ · Yusuf Akhter²

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This issue marks the retirement of Editor-in-Chief (EIC), Prof. Erko Stackebrandt who served in this role for more than 20 years for two sister journals, the *Archives of Microbiology* (AOMI) and the *Current Microbiology* (CMIC). In the career of a scientist, 20 years is a long span of time; therefore, we may simply state that these two classical journals of microbiology have got some of Erko imprinted in them and Erko has also imprinted a bit of them in him. In the last 20 years, these journals have seen tremendous growth in the influence of Erko's leadership; therefore, its authors, reviewers, and readers will remain thankful to Erko for his contribution to AOMI, CMIC, and the microbiology community in general. During the last two decades, he has established gold standards for editorial practises in the field of microbiology, which will be carried on by new editors as his never lasting legacy. He has faced many difficult challenges, with the most recent being the transition to the new editorial system. He has shown his versatility by applying these changes, and he remained ready to learn new technologies and led the entire younger brigade from the editorial team members and motivated us to apply modern tools in AOMI and CMIC. This is notable, how he maintained the quality of science we are publishing while accepting the novelty in terms of technology for the editorial and publishing process. Apart from these, the average time to the first decision at AOMI and CMIC remained fairly faster in comparison

to other journals in the field. Similarly, both journals have grown enormously in terms of the size of editorial boards as well as the average number of submissions per year (300% more submissions for AOMI in 2021 than in 2014, and 50% more submissions for CMIC in 2021 than in 2016) under the reins of Erko. This further reflects his efficiency in terms of his promptness and his eagerness to keep himself available for the editorial work. The impact factors of these journals have also seen a handsome increment during his leadership (increase by 1 point for both AOMI and CMIC, giving 2.67 and 2.34, respectively).

Erko has a long-standing international career. He holds a Ph.D. in Microbiology from the Ludwig-Maximilians University Munich. During his postdoctoral research, he worked at the German Culture Collection in Munich, then with Carl Woese at the University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign, and later on, he was a member of Karl Schleifer's research group at the Technical University, Munich. Then he was appointed as Head of the Departments of Microbiology at the University of Kiel, later at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia, and subsequently at the Technical University Braunschweig, where he also was the director of the DSMZ-German Collection of Microorganisms and Cell Cultures GmbH (German Collection of Microorganisms and Cell Cultures). His scientific career is truly international, and this is the reason for his outstanding exposure and his capability to work as a genuine international leader within the microbiology community. He has always been in favor of adequate international representation on the editorial boards, and at the same time he is an advocate of maintaining scientific quality at gold standards. He is a staunch supporter of diversity and inclusivity, which may be seen in the composition of our editorial boards, where we see a good representation of women microbiologists and the scientists from global south with outstanding scientific profiles.

His intensive scientific training and leadership at *state-of-the-art* top science institutions of the world have established him as a reference in the fields of systematics, molecular

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✉ Juan A. Mondotte
juan.mondotte@springernature.com

✉ Yusuf Akhter
yusuf@daad-alumni.de

¹ Editorial Office, Current Microbiology, Springer-Nature, Paris, France

² Department of Biotechnology, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Vidya Vihar, Raebareli Road, Lucknow 226025, India

phylogeny, and ecology of archaea and bacteria for more than 40 years. He was engaged in the description and taxonomic revision of more than 700 bacterial taxa of various ranks. He has written over 780 scientific publications in national and international journals and book contributions. He has received numerous national and international awards of scholarly eminence, including the *Bergey Award*, the *Bergey Medal*, and the *J. Roger Porter Award*.

Erko deserves the greatest recognition for the enormous efforts he has invested, his exemplary leadership, and his commitment to both of the journals, encouraging their growth and setting them as references in the field. He has passionately dedicated himself to improving the quality of scientific reporting and peer review by leading the growth of the journals and increasing the inclusion of new topics. His

intelligence, humility, permanent disposition, and devotion to hard work have been essential pillars for the growth of both journals that many times made us forget that Prof. Erko Stackebrandt is also one of the most influential evolutionary and systematic microbiologists in the world.

It has been a great pleasure and a privilege working with you Erko. Congratulations on your retirement and your outstanding career!

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