30 years of Virology Division News in Archives of Virology

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2021 sees the 30th anniversary of the collaboration between Springer (now SpringerNature), which publishes Archives of Virology (ARVI), and the Virology Division of the International Union of Microbiological Societies (VD-IUMS). This formal collaboration was heralded in an editorial written by the then journal Editor-in-Chief Dr. Frederick A. Murphy and published in the March 1991 issue of volume 116, announcing that ARVI had become the “*Official Journal of the Virology Division of the International Union of Microbiological Societies*”. Moreover, a special section named “*Virology Division News*” (VDN) was to be established to promote “papers and proceedings of the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV)” [1]. The inaugural article in this series was launched in the same volume and was authored by the first Section Editor Dr. Marian Horzinek. This paper presented the scope of the new section, with a vision that it should become “a platform for communicating many kinds of information of general interest to virologists around the world”. A particular emphasis was to be placed on “coverage of taxonomic matters” [2], either formally by the ICTV or in the form of informal input from groups of virologists interested in that niche of virology. The section is managed by the VDN Section Editor, who is also a member of the ICTV Executive Committee (EC) [3]. Table 1 lists the VDN Section Editors and their years of service.

Despite being biased towards publishing advances in virus taxonomy, VDN articles have ranged in their content to include announcements for virology-focused meetings, technical meeting agendas, reports and obituaries. Updates on the Statutes of VD-IUMS and the ICTV, as well as changes in the International Code of Virus Taxonomy and

Nomenclature, have also been reported. A selection of published VDN articles on various topics is given in Table 2. All VDN articles from 1991 onwards are freely accessible at ARVI and can be found through the link on the journal web site (<https://www.springer.com/journal/705>).

Until the early 1990s, ICTV taxonomy updates were mostly communicated in the form of “Reports” published at irregular intervals, the most recent ICTV Report having appeared in 1982. This system of providing information, although comprehensive and complete, was cumbersome, difficult to prepare and distribute in a timely fashion, and did not allow for two-way communication. Hence, the ICTV, as a committee of VD-IUMS, fully embraced the opportunity provided by VDN to communicate important information to the worldwide community of virologists on a more frequent basis. Also, virologists with an interest in virus taxonomy, whether associated with the ICTV or not, saw the inception of VDN as an opportunity to provide feedback, express opinions on certain issues, and present informal taxonomic proposals for discussion and eventual consideration by the ICTV. As a result, VDN soon became a well-recognized platform for dialogue between the ICTV and virologists. In addition, over time, VDN articles became a public forum for lively exchanges of expert opinion on various issues concerning virus nomenclature and classification [4–7].

From its inception, VDN attracted a wide readership for its content and far-reaching impact. Indeed, many groundbreaking decisions and changes in virus taxonomy were originally announced in VDN articles. Early developments included, for example, the proposal to establish the first order of viruses, *Mononegavirales*, which was advanced by the “Paramyxovirus Study Group” of the Vertebrate Virus Subcommittee and published as the second VDN article [8]. It was soon followed by a paper announcing the proposal to recognize the first family of plant viruses, *Potyviridae* (at that time, plant virus taxonomy was still based on “virus groups” as taxonomic units) [9]. Finally, the decision to establish the species rank as the basic level of virus taxonomy was published in a VDN article reporting

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Table 1 List of Virology Division News Editors since 1991

Marian C. Horzinek	1991 - 1996
Craig R. Pringle	1996 - 1999
Michael A. Mayo	1999 - 2005
Anne-Lise Haenni	2005 - 2011
Jens H. Kuhn	2011 - 2017
Sead Sabanadzovic	2017 - date

the outcomes of the 20th meeting of the EC held in Atlanta, GA in April 1991 [10]. This initial year of VDN concluded with a paper recommending the definition of the virus species as a “polythetic class of viruses”, which was soon adopted by the ICTV [11]. Looking back, it is clear that VDN rapidly jump-started vigorous debates in many areas of virology and has played a vital role in viral taxonomy and classification.

Over the past 30 years, VDN has kept its relevance among virologists as a reference for reliable virus taxonomy-related information provided in a timely fashion by the ICTV. Of particular interest to the community are the annual updates authored by the entire EC reporting the changes approved by the ICTV at the ratification vote. Recently, these articles have also explained some strategic changes in ICTV practices and standards, such as the acceptance of metagenomic-derived

sequence data for virus classification, the introduction of a 15-rank taxonomic system, and the establishment of the first virus realm (*Riboviria*) [12–17]. One recent proposal from a number of EC members to introduce standardized binomial names promoted much discussion in the community, as it would have meant wide-ranging changes to the names of species [18]. After discussion and deliberation during the 52nd annual EC meeting held in a virtual format in October 2020, the final decision on this important topic will be made at the ratification vote scheduled for the first trimester of 2021. We note that elections to the EC have recently taken place and wish the newly elected and re-elected members a successful period of office, as well as the energy to steer the ICTV through the current period of virological change.

With this article, Sead Sabanadzovic as the Section Editor of VDN and Tim Skern as the Editor-in-Chief of ARVI would like to stress the importance of discussions on topics of interest for virologists that arise from issues of virus taxonomy and nomenclature. The 290 VDN articles that have been published over the past 30 years are now freely accessible and thus available to all. We earnestly hope that the virology community will continue to take the opportunity provided through VDN to conduct constructive scientific debates and engage in dialogue with the ICTV. We look forward to receiving and reading many such articles in the future.

Table 2 A selection of Virology Division News articles in Archives of Virology

Volume	Year	Pages	Author(s)	Title
118	1991	139–141	OW Barnett	<i>Potyviridae</i> , a proposed family of plant viruses.
140	1995	1515–1520	J Maniloff	Identification and classification of viruses that have not been propagated.
140	1995	1871–1884	H-W Ackermann et al.	Relationships of tailed phages: a survey of protein sequence identity.
142	1997	629–633	D Cavanagh	<i>Nidovirales</i> : a new order comprising <i>Coronaviridae</i> and <i>Arteriviridae</i>
142	1997	2321–2326	CR Pringle	The order <i>Mononegavirales</i> – current status.
142	1997	2553–2562	M Padidam et al.	A proposal for naming geminiviruses.
142	1997	1734–1739	C Buechen-Osmond	Further progress in ICTVdB, a universal virus database.
143	1998	421–424	EP Rybicki	A proposal for naming geminiviruses: a reply by the <i>Geminiviridae</i> Study Group Chair.
147	2002	2251–2253	J Dijkstra and JA Khan	The current naming of plant viruses: a critical appraisal
145	2000	1505–1507	AJ Gibbs	Virus nomenclature descending into chaos
159	2014	2189–21919	CH Calisher & RB Tesh	Two misleading words in reports of virus discovery: little things mean a lot
162	2017	1441–1446	MJ Adams et al.	50 years of the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses: progress and prospects

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