

SCIENCE CHINA In-Sight

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2010 celebrates the 60th anniversary of this journal. From this issue, the journal features a brand new section: 'In-Sight'. Equivalent to the Cutting Edge of the *Cell*, News and Views of the *Nature* and Perspective of the *Science*, 'In-Sight' provides a forum for discussions about science and science policies in China, the history and future development of this journal and the highlights of scientific progresses published in the current issue.

For the past six decades, the journal has experienced vicissitudes just as the entire country. Originally named '*Scientia Sinica*', the journal was soon suspended a little more than one year after its launch in Aug. 1950 as a quarterly magazine published in Chinese. In Oct. 1952, the journal was resumed to publish in English after a 10 month suspension. In Sept. 1969, the height of the disastrous Cultural Revolution, the publication was suspended again till the Jan. 1973 when the journal started to publish both in Chinese and English quarterly. The publication frequency increased bimonthly from 1974 and monthly from Jan. 1979. From 1982, both Chinese and English versions were divided into series A and B, to cover Mathematics, Physics, Astronomy and Technology in series A and Chemistry, Biology, Agriculture, Medicine and Earth Science in series B. Now the journal contains seven series. A: Mathematics; B: Chemistry; C: Life Sciences; D: Earth Sciences; E: Technological Sciences; F: Information Sciences; G: Physics, Mechanics and Astronomy, all publish monthly both in Chinese and English. From Jan. 2010, '*Science in China*' merged with '*Progress in Natural Science*' and is renamed '*SCIENCE CHINA*'.

Despite the hardship caused by war earlier (Anti-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945 and civil war to 1949) and the internal turmoil later (Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976), Chinese science still had some memorable moments. The most important achievement was the total synthesis of bovine insulin in the nineteen sixties, the first functional protein synthesized in the world, followed by the high resolution of crystal structure of swine insulin in the nineteen seventies. In the early nineteen eighties, Chinese scientists successfully synthesized yeast alanine tRNA, the first artificially synthesized nuclear acid molecule in the world. In this issue, three articles [1-3] from people personally involved in these breakthroughs tell the stories behind the scene.

For the past decade, both quantity and quality of scientific research in China have taken off fueled by the booming economy. In many important areas concerning scientists all over the world, such as the outbreak of avian flu (H5N1) in 2008 and swine flu (H1N1) in 2009, Chinese scientists are getting involved timely and made important discoveries. As a matter of fact, a special issue of '*Science in China*' was dedicated to the research in influenza last year and an article revisiting the issue and highlighting the importance of the past studies in understanding the current H1N1 virus by the editor of the special issue is published in this section [4]. Another In-Sight article [5] highlighted the important work in stem cell research that Chinese scientists created the 1st viable and fertile animal from iPS cells, demonstrating the multipotency of iPS cells.

As an old Chinese cliché says, a one-thousand-mile journey starts from the first step (千里之行始于足下), I have started the journey with this first step, and will keep going. I look forward to seeing more contributions from our readers in this section along the trip and also look forward to hearing your feedback about this section. I trust with the rapid development of scientific research in China, this section, together with this journal, will reach a much higher status in years to come.

- 1 Zhang Y S. The first protein ever synthesized *in vitro*—A personal reminiscence of the total synthesis of crystalline insulin. *Sci China Life Sci*, 2010, 53: 16–18
- 2 Wang D C, Gu X C. A brief account on the study of the insulin crystal structure in retrospect: Forty years after the determination of insulin's crystal structure by Chinese scientists. *Sci China Life Sci*, 2010, 53: 13–15
- 3 Qi G R. The background of the total synthesis of yeast alanine transfer RNA. *Sci China Life Sci*, 2010, 53: 19–21
- 4 Gao G F, Sun Y P. It is not just AIV: From avian to swine-origin influenza virus. *Sci China Life Sci*, 2010, 53: 151–153
- 5 Pei X T. iPS cells—Alternative pluripotent cell to embryo stem cells. *Sci China Life Sci*, 2010, 53: 154–156

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