

## Editorial

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Published online: 9 June 2009

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Starting with the July issue of 2009 it is my honor and pleasure to serve as Editor-in-Chief of *Cellular and Molecular Life Sciences* (CMLS). On this occasion it might be appropriate to recall some of its history, and how it became the interdisciplinary journal that it is today.

Although CMLS appears under its present name only since 1997, its roots reach much deeper into the past: it developed from its predecessor, *Experientia*, founded in 1945 by Prof. Hans Mislin. Born in 1907, Mislin grew up and studied medicine in Basel. Compared to present day standards his interests were unbelievably broad: besides medicine he studied zoology, philosophy, and music, and he was a skillful singer and violinist. As a scientist, he was in command of subjects ranging from psychology, linguistics, anthropology, marine biology, ecology, you name it. He also was a truly international person. Before World War II he worked in Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Germany. After the war he was appointed professor of zoology in Mainz, a position which he held for 20 years. He retired to Switzerland and devoted his last years to the subject of ecology, documented in his treatise about St. Francis of Assisi: “Francis, the Ecumenical-Ecological Revolution” (together with Sophie Latour). Truly one of the last “Universal Scholars”.

When the war came to its end in 1945, times in Europe were troubled, many countries left in a state of desolation. Scientific activities had nearly ceased, and international communication among scientists was down to a minimum. Hans Mislin, who already as a student had organized an international lecture series in Basel, must have suffered perhaps more than others from the intellectual isolation.

Together with his schoolmate and friend, the physician Dr. Hans Birkhäuser, they approached the publisher Albert Birkhäuser, uncle of the latter, with the idea to launch a scientific journal. Birkhäuser agreed, taking a considerable economic risk at the time. The name of the journal was developed from the quotation of Paracelsus: “Scientia est Experientia”. Mislin became Editor-in-Chief and guided the journal until 1987 [1].

*Experientia* was both international and interdisciplinary. For many years it published articles in all “principal scientific languages”, including English, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, and French. Already in Volume 10 there were papers from 25 countries. Mislin’s ambition was to cover all scientific disciplines, including biology, basic medical sciences, chemistry, physics, mathematics, and geology. Although the life sciences always dominated, the scope of the journal in its initial decades included subjects ranging from the climate change to bird migration, from the safe deposit of atomic waste to the venous blood flow in the wings of bats.

With time two worldwide changes in scientific publication became obvious: English developed into the only principal scientific language, and scientific journals worldwide became more and more specialized. Already in 1969 more than two-thirds of papers submitted to *Experientia* by Swiss, French, and German authors were written in English. By 1981 the number of papers submitted in languages other than English had dropped to almost nil, and an editorial decision was taken to publish in English only. Similarly, submission of papers on non-biological subjects became negligible, and in 1985 the editorial board decided to restrict the scope of *Experientia* to the life sciences.

As a consequence but with some delay, *Experientia* was renamed “Cellular and Molecular Life Sciences” in 1997.

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Concomitantly, the journal was guided into the modern era under the leadership of Prof. Pierre Jollès as Editor-in-Chief. He introduced a number of changes to adjust the editorial procedures to the modern competitive attitude, such as to achieve short publication times. Thus, the average time from submission to publication of accepted papers is now well below 2 months. An online-first version was introduced and authors can choose their papers to appear open-access. Prof. Jollès increased the proportion of reviews among the published articles and he revived an old tradition initially introduced by Hans Mislin, namely to solicit multi-author-reviews, together with a rigorous application of quality standards resulting in a considerable rise in the journal's impact factor. International attention increased, in 2008 papers submitted originated from 59 countries. The multidisciplinary character remained the principal editorial goal: the majority of papers published in 2008 are in biochemistry, molecular biology, cell biology, and biomedicine, but nearly all categories of life sciences

are represented as well. Much of today's good standing of CMLS is owed to Prof. Jollès's successful efforts.

I will do my best to move CMLS forward, conscious of its historical development into a successful and influential forum of communication among life scientists, but also inspired by the impressive qualitative and quantitative progress of knowledge in modern life sciences which commands a continuous adjustment of publication policies to the needs of the scientific community.

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## Reference

1. Festschrift for Hans Mislin: 1907–1993 (1994) *Experientia* 50: 319–320