‘Valediction’

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Innsbruck

For the last 5 years I have acted as the Editor-in-Chief of International Archives of Allergy and Immunology together with Beatrix Grubeck-Loebenstien and a Board of highly competent and efficient Associate Editors.

We now decided to hand over our grown-up ‘child’ to a new Editorial team. Thus, this Editorial is a reflection on what we have achieved and where we did not fully succeed. Being the Editor of a journal, especially an old and well established one like International Archives, is great fun. I enjoyed being able not only to solicit and review manuscripts, but also to sit on the other side and learn the business of being an Editor. This function also gives one the impression that one is able to contribute to the shaping of the scientific future in general, albeit only to a very minor extent. It also makes one very humble, being aware that each manuscript is written with ‘heart blood’ and, in most instances, contains data based on the work of many intelligent, sophisticated and diligent authors. It always caused me personal pleasure to be able to accept a paper on the basis of competent reviews and almost physical pain when I had to reject one, especially when the main reason was a too low priority for our journal.

On the other hand, being the Editor-in-Chief of a journal is also very time consuming. Every scientist has, of course, to re-assess his/her priorities from time to time, and also to try and follow a certain schedule of his/her scientific and personal life. I had originally planned to do this job for 5 years and see whether I would be able to reshape the scope of International Archives during this period and guide it towards modern aspects of theoretical and clinical immunology. As mentioned in previous Editorials, the main goal of International Archives of Allergy and Immunology is to bridge the gap between basic and applied immunology. Specifically, we wanted to publish basic immunological papers that are also of interest to clinicians, and vice versa deal with

issues of clinical allergology and immunology obtained with modern experimental techniques that also appeal to basic immunologists. Looking back on the last 5 years, I feel that we have achieved this goal and we have also set new standards for the journal, as reflected, e.g., by a significant increase in impact. We have also introduced new sections, such as elaborate Reviews, Mini-Reviews, Controversies, Commentaries, Case Reports, Rapid Publications, Images in Allergy and Immunology, and Special Issues (1994: Apoptosis; 1995: Vaccination, and 1996: Connective Tissue Diseases). All these innovations were met with great interest from our readers, as judged from the feedback we obtained. Originally, International Archives maintained a good balance between immunology and allergology. In the years prior to my becoming Editor-in-Chief, this balance was upset in favor of allergology. Thus, one of our goals was to regain our immunologically oriented readership. Although allergology is still the prime subject of the journal, we also succeeded in publishing more papers on nonallergological topics.

On the administrative side, we tried hard to get each issue published in time. As a matter of fact, the issues are now published well before the beginning of each month and -though having already read the papers in manuscript form -I always enjoy receiving and reading my own copy again. We were also able to shorten the publication time, and the front pages as well as the figures of the papers themselves are notoriously well reproduced by Karger publishers. Among the goals that we only partly achieved are the publication of more molecular biology-oriented papers, further shortening the time elapsing between the submission and publication of papers, and the recruiting of a larger number of subscriptions in countries from the former Eastern block. I am sure, however, that these minor problems will also be solved in the future.

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Taking into account all these points as well as my own time constraints as an active researcher and teacher, I have decided to stick to my original plan an step down as the Editor-in-Chief of International Archives of Allergy and Immunology after a 5-year period. I will, therefore, hand the journal over to a new crew that will hopefully continue to improve International Archives along the lines we have put forward.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank, above all, my Managing Editor, Beatrix Grubeck-Loebenstein, who so efficiently fulfilled this difficult task. I look back with pleasure on our weekly editorial conferences where we were able to solve even the most intricate problems in a hopefully fair and, if necessary, diplomatic fashion. I was impressed and delighted to work with such a competent and friendly, but decisive Managing Editor for the last 5 years, who – in addition to her editorial work – also made outstanding scientific contributions in her own field. Anita Ho-henegger was an optimal secretary who ran the Scientific Office in Innsbruck with great oversight, competence and speed. I would also like to thank Karger publishers in general and Thomas Karger in particular for their uncomplicated and professional collaboration. Having the efficient support of Evelyn Lieberherr, the Administrative Secretary in Basel, certainly took a lot of non-scientific burden off our backs, and I can only recommend this model, i.e. having separate Administrative and Scientific Secretariats, to other Editors. Further people at Karger in Basel to whom we owe our thanks are Thomas Nold, Head of Product Management, Peter Roth for the perfect organization of the publication of exciting Supplement Issues, Pamela Koppay-Pinto and Stefan Sessler, our efficient and cooperative partners in the Journals' Production Department, and last, but not least, Dagmar Horn, Vanessa Aellig and Esther Coscino for their untiring efforts to promote the journal and to take care of its subscribers.

The members of our Board of Associate Editors were, of course, burdened with manuscripts to a different extent, depending on their fields of expertise. We did, however, never get a manuscript for which we would not have had a top expert Associate Editor, who could take care of the paper from soliciting the referees until the decision about its final

fate. It gives me great pleasure to extend my warmest thanks to the Associate Editors as well as to the many ad hoc reviewers who helped us make International Archives a better journal. The names of those referees who were engaged in the reviewing work for International Archives from October 1995 to September 1996 are listed in this issue.

As mentioned above, being an Editor-in-Chief also allows for the incorporation of very personal ideas and views into the make-up of a journal. Besides the first priority, i.e. the scientific quality of a paper, I always urged authors to cite original references rather than secondary reviews, even if the former were already Oldies' (as my students would call work published before 1992). I also took care in evaluating the ethical aspects of studies in humans and experimental animals, and we rejected several papers on this basis. Finally, since my own native tongue is not English, we paid special attention to the English of the published papers in order to assure that it was as good as possible, even if a manuscript had to be sent back to the authors several times. We also took every effort to avoid the publication of data that were already published elsewhere, even in part, and appreciated the vigilance of our Associate Editors who alerted us to this possibility. Who is going to take over as the new Editors? My close friend and long-term Viennese colleague, one of the outstanding allergologists of the world, Dietrich Kraft, will take over International Archives of Allergy and Immunology during the next year and officially become Editor-in-Chief in January 1998, when the Scientific Secretariat moves from Innsbruck to Vienna. Dietrich Kraft will team up with Rudolf Valenta as his Managing Editor, both being at the Institute for General and Experimental Pathology, University of Vienna, Medical School. I am persuaded that this new team will lead our journal to new horizons and I will myself do everything to help them in their task.

With regard to my own intentions, I hope to be able to use the additional regained research time to continue to produce data that will be acceptable for publication in future issues of International Archives of Allergy and Immunology.

Finally, I would like to say good-bye to our readers who so faithfully accompanied me during the last 5 years.

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