Editorial Note

With this edition on 'Somatic Stem Cells and Their Plasticity' CTO continues to publish what is intended to become a series of special issues devoted to recent developments in stem cell research, started in 1999 with 'Embryonic Stem Cells as a Developmental Model in vitro' (Vol. 165/3–4; A.M. Wobus and K.R. Boheler, eds.), a publication that was very well received by the scientific community. We expect that the present issue may find at least as much attention as the previous one: Recently an exploding number of reports has demonstrated an astonishing plasticity of somatic stem cells, findings that were totally unexpected at earlier times and that may revolutionize our views of embryonic development as well as our prospects of possible therapeutic uses of somatic vs. embryonic stem cells. I am very happy that Albrecht Müller and Kelly McNagny have accepted to take care of this publication project and have invested the enormous amount of time and effort that was needed to bring this to fruition. It is due to their enthusiasm that it was possible to bring together an excellent spectrum of contributions from various leading laboratories.

For CTO this special issue intends to underline and deepen our new focus on the emerging fields of transplantation biology, tissue engineering, artificial organs and in vitro systems and our devotion of basing research in these fields on modern concepts of cell and developmental biology. CTO plans to continue on in this direction.

Hans-Werner Denker