

Editorial

Looking Back on My Time as Editor-in-Chief

I began my tenure as Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Neuroscience* by writing an editorial entitled, “A commitment to communication.” In that editorial, I outlined a number of plans for new initiatives, along with my promise to be as transparent as possible about changes and processes at *JNeurosci*. Since that time, we have made many changes to the policies and format of *JNeurosci* and I have had a wonderful time interacting with our editors, reviewers, and authors (Fig. 1).

The changes made so far can be grouped into several categories: changes in format and content, updated policies to encourage scientific rigor, expansion of our content by introducing new features, and new initiatives to encourage participation in the review process by trainees. As I complete my term, I would like to look back at some of the ways *JNeurosci* has changed to meet the needs of our community.

Changes in format and content

Who among us has not grappled with innumerable pages of very lightly reviewed supplementary figures? *JNeurosci* moved to include all important information for a study in the main body of the manuscript, primarily to make sure all the data relevant to the work were easily accessed and reviewed. Unfortunately, that meant that *JNeurosci* could not host data-intensive manuscripts with large tables or datasets. As a result, one of the first changes we made when I started as Editor-in-Chief was to change our policy so we could host Extended Data. These datasets are encouraged to be in forms that are useful for further analyses.

Accessibility of data was also in our minds as we moved to becoming a fully online journal and retired our paper version. We will miss the physical covers, but this also allowed us to publish articles online in Early Release very rapidly, rather than waiting for the article to appear in a physical issue. Our goal was to cut the time from acceptance to availability to read to a minimum, rapidly disseminating peer reviewed research. Similarly, our commitment to rapid dissemination is reflected in our preprint policy: *JNeurosci* welcomes preprints and provides the possibility of direct submission from bioRxiv. We believe that rigorous peer review by *JNeurosci* should coexist productively with the posting of preprints.

Scientific rigor and reproducibility

A primary goal of *JNeurosci* is to publish research that is valuable to the scientific community for as long as possible. We are proud that the work published in *JNeurosci* continues to be highly cited for decades. In fact, the cited half-life for *JNeurosci* is almost 12 years.

In service of this goal, we have published an Editorial series (<https://www.jneurosci.org/collection/experimental-design-editorials>) to go along with our statistical reporting guidelines (Piccotto, 2017) that lays out areas of experimental design that we believe should be addressed at the very beginning of a study. This series was drafted by groups of editors with expertise in different subdisciplines who handle many articles in each area to address issues that come up often during review. Topics

covered in the series include sample size (Editorial Board, 2020), design and analysis in human neuroimaging studies (Piccotto, 2018), considerations for *in vivo* electrophysiology (Editorial Board, 2018), behavioral studies using invertebrate or vertebrate model organisms (Editorial Board, 2019a), and guidelines for studies of aging or neurodegeneration (Editorial Board, 2019b). We have made these as general as possible with the hope that they will remain a resource for trainees and authors.

Feature articles

In addition to the Annual Meeting issue that highlights topics presented in lectures, symposia, and mini-symposia, we published special issues to celebrate milestones for SfN and *JNeurosci*. We celebrated the 50th Anniversary of SfN with the publication of an issue to show how far we have come with research on topics presented at the very first annual meeting in 1969, including some perspectives by neuroscientists who presented at the first meeting (<https://www.jneurosci.org/collection/50th-anniversary>). In addition to looking back on how the field has changed, we also commissioned a forward-looking article by neuroscience trainees suggesting where the field may go next (Altimus et al., 2020). This mix of looking back and looking forward reflects the goals of *JNeurosci* to archive neuroscience knowledge, while supporting trainees and contributing to advancing neuroscience research into the future.

Among the other special features introduced has been the Dual Perspectives series, designed to present alternative points of view on areas of controversy in the neuroscience field. These articles proved so popular that they have been extended to sessions at the Annual Meeting, providing a collegial forum for disagreements in scientific interpretation. We have also published a more personal series of reviews, Progressions, which highlight both the scientific and individual journey of neuroscientists who have made discoveries in the field.

Finally, we now invite our authors to submit methods papers for peer review in *JNeurosci*, since many advances in the field have been made as a result of significant methodological developments that change what types of experiments are feasible.

Trainee initiatives

Perhaps most importantly, *JNeurosci* is committed to the development of trainees and to welcoming our junior colleagues into the review process. Like many of you, I learned how to carry out peer reviews by co-reviewing with my mentors over the years. *JNeurosci* collects the names of trainee co-reviewers and we now thank these valuable members of our community publicly in our annual listing of peer reviewers. We also developed a formal Reviewer Mentoring Program to pair trainees with frequent reviewers and members of our editorial board who provide one-on-one training in how to carry out a collegial and thorough peer review. Once completing the program, trainees are entered into our reviewer database so they can be invited to review on their own.

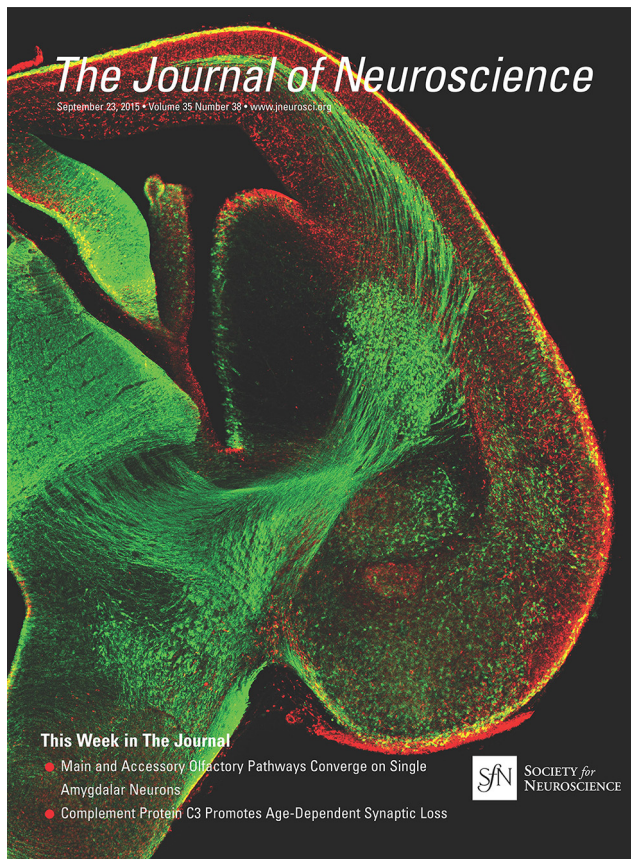


Figure 1. Cover from *The Journal of Neuroscience*, volume 35, issue 38. Image provided by Abe et al. (2015).

In 2019, we started an annual tradition of the Annual Spotlight to bring attention to a few of the remarkable studies published in *JNeurosci* each year. The articles are highlighted at the beginning of the year and the first authors of these studies are invited to summarize their work in a podcast.


Trainees are critical to *JNeurosci* and are shaping our field, so we are eager to receive trainee input on how to serve the community effectively.

A big thank you

To all those who have reviewed for *JNeurosci*, sent the studies you have worked hard on to the Journal, or offered ideas

and constructive criticism, thank you for making my time with *JNeurosci* extremely rewarding. I have learned a lot from all of you and I have loved serving as Editor-in-Chief. Many of you have expressed to me the special value that *JNeurosci* has had for you, both now and during your early development as a neuroscientist. I believe strongly that society journals and peer review are incredibly important for the scientific process and serve the community in so many ways. As the publishing process changes, it is important for *JNeurosci* to change and meet the evolving needs of our community. As a result, it is important to have new ideas and energy, both of which we will gain from our new Editor-in-Chief, Sabine Kastner.

Goodbyes are bittersweet. I would like to think that I am leaving the Journal in even better shape than when I began as Editor-in-Chief, and I know that I am passing the responsibility for the Journal to a skilled and innovative new leader as Kastner takes over as Editor-in-Chief in 2023.

 Marina Picciotto,
Editor-in-Chief

<https://doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.2137-22.2022>

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