

Editorial

Tribute to the Outgoing Editor-in-Chief

At the end of this year, Marina Picciotto will step down as *JNeurosci* Editor-in-Chief after a 7-year term in the office and over 16 combined years of service as an editor. Before we welcome Sabine Kastner as the next Editor-in-Chief, we wanted to look back on Marina's tenure and thank her for her myriad of contributions to the journal, Society for Neuroscience, and neuroscience community.

The years of Marina's term have included significant challenges: she came to office mid-year as an interim appointment; the publishing industry has seen policy and practice shifts; and the COVID-19 pandemic majorly disrupted normal trends and processes. But this period also saw the growth of *eNeuro* and the development of the close relationship between the two journals, the Society's 50th anniversary, and the 40th anniversary of the journal, among other reasons to celebrate. Through this all, Marina has led the journal with creativity, collaboration, and care, and has set *JNeurosci* up for the next phase of its life as the flagship journal of the Society for Neuroscience.

Enhancing editorial policies and scientific rigor

Since its founding in 1981, *The Journal of Neuroscience* has had the mission of serving the neuroscience community by publishing the strongest science in this broad and evolving field, reviewed and approved by working scientists. Scientific rigor has long been a hallmark of the journal and one of the many contributing factors to why *JNeurosci* is the most-cited journal in the field. In addition to maintaining consistent editorial standards and recruiting leading researchers to join the Editorial Board, Marina has put several policies in place that promote reproducibility, ethical research practices, and sound experimental design.

Supplemental material, including supporting datasets, had been discontinued in the journal in 2010, because of concerns that it encouraged reviewers to ask for endless additional experiments that often were not essential to support the key findings, and did not receive the same level of peer review as the primary data. As time went on and the field evolved, however, it became clear that there was a need for the journal to host additional forms of primary data that could not otherwise be presented in a research paper, including large tables, datasets, or complex figures. As a result, Marina introduced Extended Data in 2017, with provisions that allowed the Editorial Board to ensure proper vetting during review, to enhance the reproducibility and transparency of the results.

In collaboration with the Editorial Board, Marina also oversaw the implementation of new guidelines designed to ensure that editors can thoroughly evaluate the rigor of submitted studies. Under the current policy, introduced in 2017, authors of research manuscripts must include an Experimental design and statistical analysis subsection within the Materials and Methods, that includes study details, such as control group and sample sizes, sex of subjects, and other variables, as well as any statistical tests used. While this standardization is important during review, it is also key for readers to

evaluate and replicate the results themselves, which is the cornerstone of rigorous science.

Marina introduced a series of Experimental Design Editorials in 2018, with each piece written by a small group of editors and providing recommendations on statistical and experimental procedures, often relating to a specific subfield. While the series was introduced to maintain the standard of papers submitted to the journal and to provide transparency around the editorial evaluation of these topics, these editorials help to document best practices for conducting science more generally, before a paper is ever written. The five articles in the series remain highly read, discussed, and cited, indicating their lasting value to the community.

Expanding journal content

The core of *JNeurosci* is and will remain peer-reviewed research reports, but nonresearch content can be vital in providing context, provoking discussion, and generating interest in the field. As Editor-in-Chief, Marina introduced new article types to support those goals: Viewpoints, which provide overviews of single topics written to be accessible to all readers of the journal; TechSights, or reviews of emerging techniques; Dual Perspectives, which are paired articles expressing different views on a single issue; Progressions, which reflect on and update the seminal work previously published in *JNeurosci*; and Reviews, often written by influential researchers.

Dual Perspectives created an important link between the journal and the SfN annual meeting, which began featuring sessions of the same name, originally based on the *JNeurosci* articles. As the Program Committee began to recruit new speakers for the Dual Perspectives session at the meeting, those speakers were in turn invited to submit companion Dual Perspectives to the journal.

During the Society's 50th Anniversary in 2020 and the journal's 40th Anniversary in 2021, Feature article types helped to illustrate the storied history of both Society and journal. In two special article collections designed and recruited by Marina, the journal reflected on the first meeting in 1971 and work published in the journal's first volume in 1981, as well as the evolution of specific fields and concepts over the preceding decades.

Research reports have also evolved. To recognize the ongoing strength of the science published in the journal, Marina developed the annual Spotlight feature in late 2019, which highlights the articles published the previous year that received the highest marks from reviewers on their significance and methodology. Marina regularly consulted the Editorial Board to ensure that the scope of the journal reflects the current breadth of the field, and that journal content remains valuable and interesting to readers. In early 2022, a long-held policy was reversed to allow novel methods reports to be considered for publication in the journal.

Supporting the community

Marina began her term with a commitment to communication and a promise to hear the feedback—both positive and negative—from readers, authors, reviewers, and editors, to better shape the journal so that it reflects the real needs of the community. She

maintained this commitment throughout her time as Editor, and many of her notable initiatives were in response to, or in anticipation of, the needs of neuroscience researchers, including the elimination of the submission fee and improvements to the editorial rejection process.

Marina oversaw the creation of the Reviewer Mentor Program, where experienced reviewers provide one-on-one coaching to interested trainees through a mock review process. While the program was created primarily as a resource for early career researchers, who would often contact the Editorial Board with questions on how to be more involved or how to serve as a reviewer, Marina saw other ways it could benefit the field: by increasing the quality of written reviews, the number of skilled referees in the journal's reviewer database, and the diversity and equity of the reviewer pool. Since its launch in 2018, the program has seen 87 graduates, many of whom have already been tapped to serve as reviewers for *JNeurosci* and *eNeuro*.

Although *eNeuro* was already in existence when Marina's term began, she worked closely with *eNeuro* Editor-in-Chief Christophe Bernard to shape the complementary relationship between the two journals, as well as the editorial collaboration enabled through the journal transfer process. The alignment in policies and philosophy is key to the success for SfN's publications; the two journals provide flexibility and

options to researchers deciding where to submit, while still ensuring consistent quality standards.

Looking to the future

These examples are only a few of the ways in which Marina's stewardship and advocacy have positively shaped the journal over the last 7 years, and we are deeply grateful to her for her clear vision and strong leadership. We are fortunate that she has joined us on SfN Council as President-Elect in November 2022, so SfN and the field of neuroscience more generally will continue to benefit from her incredible energy and vision in the coming years.

In January 2023, Sabine Kastner will take the helm as Editor-in-Chief of the journal, and we are excited to see her vision take shape. We are confident that she will build on the strong foundations laid by Marina and the Editors-in-Chief before her and carry the journal's strong legacy forward.

Barry Everitt, University of Cambridge, UK
Gina Turrigiano, Department of Biology and Neuroscience
Program, Brandeis University and
Oswald Steward, University of California–Irvine
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