

Editorial

With the first issue of Volume 14, the editorship of *Visual Neuroscience* will pass to Peter D. Spear of the University of Colorado. A senior member of the visual science community, Peter Spear has worked at virtually all levels of the visual system using a wide range of neuroscience techniques. He also brings considerable editorial and administrative experience to the journal. It is a pleasure to welcome him to the editorship and to one of the most interesting and rewarding jobs one can imagine.

Since its beginnings under the leadership of Kathrine Fite, *Visual Neuroscience* has taken its place among those journals in which one finds the best work of leading investigators. Appearing at a time when institutional libraries were drastically reducing their periodical subscriptions, the journal has not only managed to survive but, with the continuing support of Cambridge University Press, has grown. Constraints on research funding have not slowed the flow of manuscripts of high quality. The subjects addressed in these papers range from molecular mechanisms to models of system behavior, providing further evidence that the visual system offers opportunities for the study of neural function that are virtually unparalleled in other systems. The growth in submissions also means that pressure on space in the journal continues to increase. Therefore the process of selecting manuscripts for publication must respond appropriately to avoid unacceptable delays in the appearance of papers of the highest quality and broadest relevance.

At the heart of the editorial process are the reports of anonymous referees, who are asked to spend some of their valuable time thinking about someone else's unpublished research and to write a timely, unbiased and constructive review. My experience as Editor of *Visual Neuroscience* over the last five years has led me to the following conclusion: This system really works.

Ninety-nine percent of the reviews I have received were written with the clear intention of helping authors strengthen their papers. The amount of careful thought that goes into most reviews is truly impressive and the only concrete reward for this effort, namely having one's name listed at the end of a volume, is inadequate indeed. Of course, not all reviews are responsibly written and a few of these slip past the eyes of the Editor, whose job it is to screen them out. Also, there are those few "black holes" who agree to referee a paper but never return the report. These are the bane of any editor's existence, but they can be identified quickly and carefully avoided. Such problems arise in only a minuscule fraction of the assessments carried out each year and are no reason to discard the process, as some would argue. I would like, then, to express my gratitude to the referees who have joined in the editorial enterprise during my tenure, and to affirm that anonymous peer review has served *Visual Neuroscience* and its authors well.

As a final item in this valedictory editorial, I wish to acknowledge the contribution of certain individuals whose practical efforts have made the journal work. James Alexander, Journals Editor at the New York office of Cambridge University Press until his untimely death in 1995, watched over *Visual Neuroscience* through its fledgling years. Morrell Gillette, Journals Production Editor, has been of great help to me and to the many authors who have called on him. That the Editor has been able to enjoy the scientific side of the enterprise owes much to the efforts of two successive editorial assistants, Suzanne Meagher and Rosanna D'Arezzo Cabral who have managed the journal office with skill and dedication.

James T. McIlwain