

# 8 The Journal of Pathology: Past, Present and Future

*C. Simon Herrington*

## ORIGINS

The *Journal of Pathology* began life in 1893 as the *Journal of Pathology and Bacteriology*. It was founded by German Sims-Woodhead (Fig. 8.1) who, at the time, was Director of the Laboratories of the Conjoint Board of the Royal College of Physicians (London) and Royal College of Surgeons (England). He had moved to London in 1890 from Edinburgh, where he had previously been a medical student, then first assistant to Professor Greenfield and subsequently the first Superintendent of the Royal College of Physicians Laboratory. This explains the fact that the Journal was initially published in conjunction with his friend Young J. Pentland of Edinburgh. This was very much a private enterprise but found support from a number of illustrious figures from pathology history, including Virchow and Metchnikoff, who both contributed to the first issue (Metchnikoff, 1893; Virchow, 1893). The introduction to the first volume of the Journal makes interesting reading and still holds resonance today: 'It has been thought desirable, therefore, to found a Journal specially devoted to the publication of original contributions on General Pathology, Pathological Anatomy, and Experimental Pathology, including Bacteriology. These contributions will, of course, be mainly from British Laboratories and Hospitals; but the co-operation of many distinguished Continental, American, and Colonial Pathologists has been obtained, and papers written or edited by them will, from time to time, be placed before our readers' (Sims-Woodhead, 1893). Further details of Sims-Woodhead's contribution to pathology and to the Journal are given in an editorial written by Dennis Wright (Wright, 1986).

The Journal proved to be a significant financial burden to Sims-Woodhead and, when The Pathological Society of Great Britain and Ireland was founded in 1906, he offered to share its proprietorship with the Society. In March 1907, an Association was formed to acquire the Journal from Sims-Woodhead, who was paid a cash sum together with an allocation of shares in the Association. The new arrangements were announced in an editorial published in 1908 (Editorial, 1908). Further details of this transaction are recorded in the history written by J. H. Dible to mark the Society's 50th Anniversary (Dible, 1957).

## A SOCIETY JOURNAL

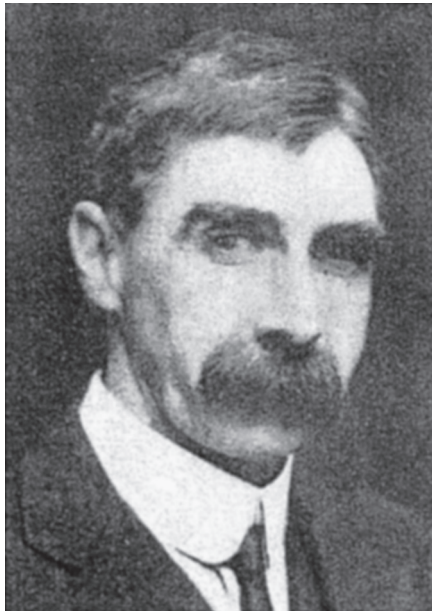
Sims-Woodhead continued as editor, with J. Ritchie and A. E. Boycott as assistant editors and, in 1914, he was invited to a special meeting of the committee at which transfer of ownership of the Journal to the Society was discussed. The decision was taken to conclude this transfer in the Summer of 1915. However, the First World War intervened and the Society committee did not



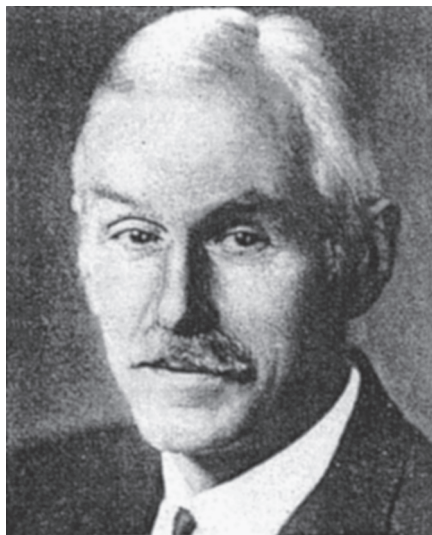
**Figure 8.1** G. Sims-Woodhead, Founder and Editor 1893–1920.

meet again for 5 years. In January 1920, the Journal title finally passed to the Society, who have owned it ever since.

Coincident with this transfer of title, it was agreed that the editorship of the Journal should be determined by the Committee of The Pathological Society. As a result, the editorship passed, by mutual agreement and after some 27 years, from Sims-Woodhead to J. Ritchie (Fig. 8.2)



**Figure 8.2** J. Ritchie, Editor 1920–1923.



**Figure 8.3** A. E. Boycott, Editor 1923–1934.

in the summer of 1920, with A. E. Boycott and H. R. Dean as assistant editors. At this time, the Journal was published by Cambridge Press but printed by Messrs Morrison and Gibb in Edinburgh. Early in 1920, however, the publishers refused to continue to finance and publish the Journal, precipitating a crisis and leading to a change in publishers to Messrs Oliver and Boyd, also of Edinburgh (Dible, 1957). In 1923, Ritchie died. A. E. Boycott (Fig. 8.3) was appointed editor, with M. J. Stewart and C. Price Jones as assistant editors. The first hint of the resurgence of financial difficulties was recorded in 1930, when the Journal had incurred a loss. The editors were asked to reduce costs and also to write to members asking them to curtail the length of their papers! This heralded a period of financial uncertainty. The amount owed to the publishers was greater than the level of the Society's overdraft and the editor was charged with trying to negotiate a reduction in the publisher's fees, as well as with the task of exploring other publishers. A significant turnaround was achieved by 1931, in terms of both conversion of loss into profit and negotiation of a reduced charge levied by the publishers. The Committee of the Society, however, asked for further investigation of alternative publishers and subsequently voted that the Journal be transferred to Oxford Medical Press. This prompted the resignation of both Boycott and Stewart, as a result of which the decision of the committee was rescinded. Boycott and Stewart withdrew their resignations but Boycott signalled that he did not feel he could continue as editor for much longer. Dible viewed this series of events as a significant landmark in the history of the Society (Dible, 1957) because it cemented the relationship between the Society and the publisher, which was still ongoing at the time that he wrote his article and, indeed, continued for many years to come. There is no doubt that the Journal's history is intimately intertwined with both its publishers and the Society, a principle that is still true today.

In 1934, Boycott resigned as editor on medical advice (he died in 1938) and M. J. Stewart (Fig. 8.4) was appointed in his place. By all accounts, Boycott had been a remarkable editor. He was described as 'autocratic' and said to have an 'extreme aversion to commas' (Dible, 1957), a subject that still has the capacity to induce heated debate.

The Second World War had a significant effect on both the Society and the Journal. Somewhat paradoxically, the Society's finances improved during the War, as a result of a reduced number of meetings, but the shortage of paper proved a cause for concern for the editor because this



**Figure 8.4** M. J. Stewart, Editor 1934–1955.

had produced a backlog of papers for publication. In 1953, the delay in publishing papers had reached 8 months and the publication of additional volumes, along with an increase in subscriptions, was considered. Stewart resigned as editor at the end of 1955 and was replaced by C. L. Oakley (Fig. 8.5).



**Figure 8.5** C. L. Oakley, Editor 1955–1973.

**DIVISION OF THE JOURNAL**

The next major event in the Journal's history was its separation into the *Journal of Pathology* and the *Journal of Medical Microbiology*. The latter is dealt with in Chapter 10 (Duerden and Collee, 2006) and the following discussion deals specifically with the *Journal of Pathology*. There is a record, in Lendrum's 75th Anniversary account of the Society, that this was agreed in 1967 (Lendrum, 1981) but it did not happen until 1969 (Fig. 8.6 A and B). This very significant change

# The Journal of Pathology and Bacteriology

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE PATHOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

EDITED BY

C. L. OAKLEY

B. LENNOX

J. P. DUGUID

A. R. CURRIE

W. THOMAS SMITH

J. SWANSON BECK

E. FLORENCE McKEOWN

J. G. COLLEE



FOUNDED IN 1892 BY  
GERMAN SIMS WOODHEAD

VOLUME NINETY-SIX

Oliver and Boyd Ltd.

LONDON: 39A WELBECK STREET, W.1

EDINBURGH: TWEEDDALE COURT, 14 HIGH STREET

1968

**Figure 8.6 A** Front covers of (A) the last issue of the *Journal of Pathology and Bacteriology* and (B) the first issue of the *Journal of Pathology*.

was overseen by C. L. Oakley, who initially edited both Journals. He continued as editor of the *Journal of Pathology* until 1973, being succeeded by W. Spector (Fig. 8.7), who was editor until his untimely death in 1982. Several significant events took place around this time. The Committee Minutes of 1981 make mention that the *Investigative and Cell Pathology* journal was to change its name to *Diagnostic Histopathology* and become a Society journal. The death of Spector in early 1982 precipitated a special meeting of the officers, at which D. Willoughby was appointed acting editor. The Minutes for that year also record some of the problems with the publisher, including loss of copy, publication of volumes in the wrong order, failure to use corrected page proofs, a large backlog and long delays in publication. Later in 1982, the decision was taken to change the

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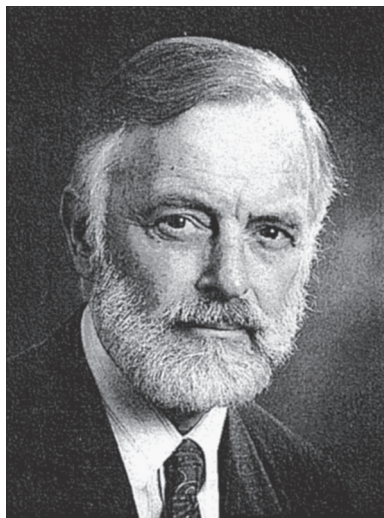
Figure 8.6 B (Continued)



**Figure 8.7** W. Spector, Editor 1974–1982.

publisher from Longmans to John Wiley and Sons and to merge it with *Diagnostic Histopathology*. Dennis Wright (Fig 8.8) was appointed the new editor. These decisions were ratified in 1983 and the publisher changed from January 1984 (Walker, 2006). As an aside, the Journal came to be published by Longman's as a result of Oliver and Boyd becoming a division of that publishing house in 1970: this change can be gleaned from the front covers of the Journal issues, which alter to reflect this fact in January 1970.

The Journal went from strength to strength throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s when it celebrated its centenary, which was marked by an editorial (Wright, 1994). In the same year, the editorship passed to Peter Toner (Fig. 8.9), during whose term of office the transition to electronic publication began to have a significant effect on the Journal. In addition, the publication of Annual



**Figure 8.8** D. H. Wright, Editor 1983–1994.



**Figure 8.9** P. G. Toner, Editor 1994–2002.

Review Issues was instigated (Toner, 1998), the first of these dealing with Molecular and Cellular Themes in Cancer Research and appearing in January 1999. This development has been highly successful, producing high quality contributions to the review literature that have the significant added benefit of being good for the impact factor, of which more later!

## THE NEW MILLENNIUM

In 2000, the Journal appeared on the worldwide web, through Wiley Interscience, with electronic versions of all papers back to 1997 appearing as pdf files (Toner and Reece, 2000a). This was supplemented later the same year by introduction of the EarlyView service, whereby papers that are ready for publication but are waiting in the queue to appear in a paper issue are published online (Toner and Reece, 2000b). Importantly, these papers are visible to the clinical and scientific communities through electronic search engines and are indexed through the PubMed system.

The meeting of the Journal editorial board in 2000 was a landmark event. The structure of this meeting was a departure from the traditional approach, allowing more time for 'brainstorming' and discussion. As a result, a new editorial structure was developed and several significant changes were made to the running of the Journal. Six associate editors (Fred Bosman, Peter Hall, James Kirkpatrick, Richard Poulson, Rosemary Walker and me) were appointed. The post of managing editor was created and it was agreed that this individual would be based in the London offices of the Society, rather than in the offices of the editor. Jeremy Theobald was appointed to this post in October 2001 and I took up office as editor in January 2002 (Fig. 8.10). During this time, John Wiley and Sons had been developing the Manuscript Central online manuscript tracking system for use with several of their journals. The Belfast office of the *Journal of Pathology* piloted the system during 2001 and it went 'live' in February 2002 (Toner and Herrington, 2002).

Manuscript Central has been extremely successful. It has allowed the online processing of all manuscripts, with easy and effective communication between the associate editors, assistant editor, authors and reviewers, who are distributed all over the world. This has led to an ever-increasing database of reviewers, a large proportion of whom are now based in countries other than the UK,





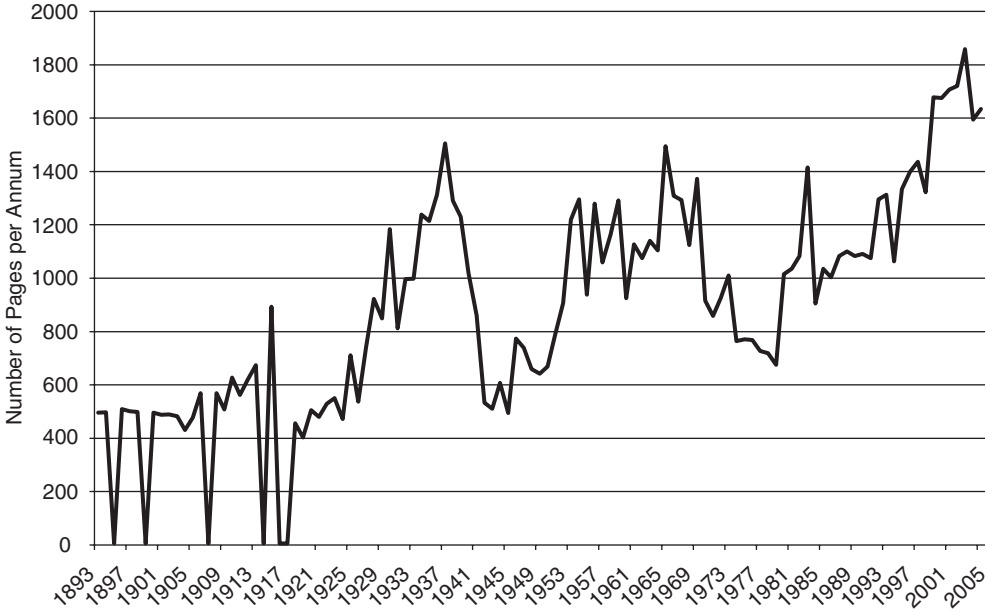
**Figure 8.10** C. S. Herrington, Editor 2002–current.

with an increasing number from North America, Japan, Australia and many other countries. The authorship and global impact of the Journal are also broadening. For example, in June 2003 we published a paper from China describing the clinical pathology of SARS (Ding *et al.*, 2003); this attracted considerable media attention, particularly from the Far East and Australasia, and led to submission and subsequent publication of further influential papers on this infectious disease. Similarly, in July 2004 the Journal was mentioned on the front page of *The Times* newspaper as a result of publication of a paper describing the prevalence of prion proteins in archival tonsillar and appendiceal tissues (Hilton *et al.*, 2004). There is no doubt that the development of electronic publishing, and the wider effects of the web, played major roles in these successes.

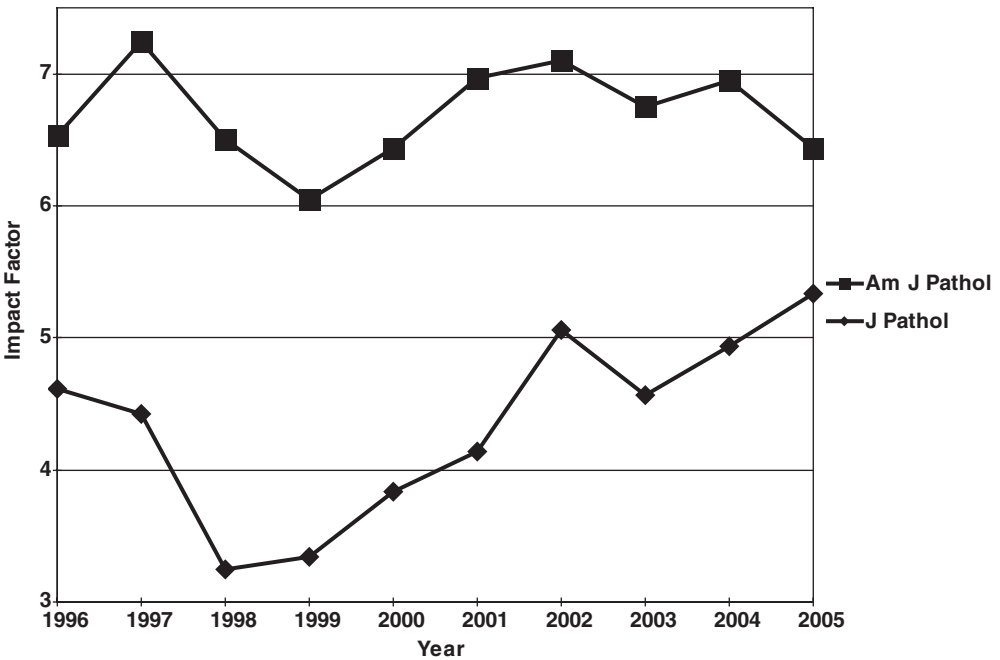
Another major development took place in 2005. As a result of a gargantuan effort by John Wiley and Sons, the entire archive of the *Journal of Pathology (and Bacteriology)* was published online. This is available via the Journal website at <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/jhome/1130>, is fully searchable and provides electronic access to pdf files of all papers published in the Journal from its foundation in 1893. The archive is fascinating. It is now possible to search for, download, print and read any paper published in the Journal, including seminal works by many distinguished investigators. It also allows analysis of how the Journal has changed throughout its history. For example, changes in the volume of published copy can be gleaned from the data contained in the archive (Fig. 8.11). Note that the effects of the two World Wars are evident, as is the decline in copy in the 1970s (said to be related to poor performance of the then publishers, Longmans), with a rebound increase to deal with the backlog when the publisher changed in 1984. The effect of the introduction of Annual Review Issues is also clearly visible.

## THE FUTURE

So what of the future? As Peter Toner and I remarked in 2002, ‘nothing stands still in the world of publishing’! Our impact factor currently stands at 5.33; we are ranked second in pathology (first for immediacy index) and are closing the gap on the *American Journal of Pathology* (Fig. 8.12). Although impact factor is not everything, it is an important parameter by which we are judged.



**Figure 8.11** The number of pages published per annum from 1893 to 2005. No issues were published in some calendar years early in the Journal’s history but volumes at this time were often dated across two years, e.g. 1913–1914. Note the slow recovery in copy after both World Wars, with a remarkable peak in the intervening period. The trough in the 1970s may be related to the problems with the publisher at that time. The increase due to the introduction of Annual Review Issues in 1999 is also visible.



**Figure 8.12** Trends in impact factor for the *Journal of Pathology* and its main competitor the *American Journal of Pathology* (1996–2005).

Plans for the future must therefore take it, as well as other considerations, into account. At a recent meeting of the editorial board, we discussed how we can improve the quality of the Journal still further, or 'raise the bar' as it was put. This requires careful thought but increasing our profile in other parts of the world, particularly China and the USA, is an important part of our plans. There is no doubt that the Annual Review Issues have been hugely successful and appropriate management of these, with timely publication, is crucial. Open Access publishing is a challenge that faces the Journal, the Society and the publisher. The appearance and expansion of specific journals that employ the 'author pays', rather than the 'subscriber pays', model, together with the adoption by some journals of various approaches to providing 'free' content to readers, has the potential to damage the fiscal health of the Journal, with potential knock-on effects on both the publisher and the Society. As you can imagine, we are watching the development of this publishing model very closely, both in the UK and abroad. Although the concept of providing journal content free to all who want to read it is laudable, the practical implementation of such a policy is more difficult to envisage unless there are major alterations to how research, particularly the publication of research data, is funded. Naturally, the editors of the *Journal of Pathology*, the officers of the Society and the publishers will be keeping a close eye on developments to ensure that the Journal does not suffer from any changes in corporate or government policy.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

The *Journal of Pathology (and Bacteriology)* has an illustrious history. Compiling this short account made this clear to me and also demonstrated that many of the issues faced by my predecessors are still relevant today. The Journal is in good shape. We are holding our own in an increasingly global market but we cannot be complacent. Through continued quality improvements we aspire to improve our position still further and, with the help of authors, reviewers, editors and publishers, not to mention the Society, we will endeavour to do so.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the running and production of the Journal since its inception. This includes the Journal's founder and the succession of editors, assistant editors and now associate editors, not forgetting the members of the editorial board, the authors, the reviewers and, of course, the publishers, John Wiley and Sons, who have supported the Journal unflinchingly for many years. Finally, as you can see from the above account, the Journal is inextricably linked with The Pathological Society of Great Britain and Ireland and I thank the Society officers, committee, administrators and members for their continued support. Specific thanks go to the current Secretary of the Society, Peter Hall, for sharing his findings from the Committee Minutes with me, and to Jeremy Theobald (managing editor) and Louise Ryan (assistant editor) for their constant support. I also thank Jeremy for providing Fig. 8.11, which was initially included in the publisher's report for 2005.

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### Wright was right

Stromal reactions to tumour cells had captured my interest in the early 1970s. I devised an elegant (well, I thought so) *in vitro* assay to measure the fibroblast growth-stimulating effect of dialysed human tumour extracts. I assessed this by tritiated thymidine uptake in serum-deprived (G0) fibroblast cultures. I expected to find a positive correlation with the degree of stromal desmoplasia and eventually discover the growth factor. After presenting this to The Pathological Society audience, the memorable question came from Dr Nicholas Wright. ‘How can you be so certain that the uptake of tritiated thymidine is a measure of fibroblast proliferation rather than DNA repair?’ he asked. ‘A good question’ I replied, and then blathered. That alternative explanation had never crossed my mind. I learnt two lessons from this. First, avoid surrogates (tritiated thymidine uptake) for what is directly measurable (more cells). Second, don’t be seduced into believing that trendy sophisticated techniques make the work more ‘scientific’.

**James Underwood**

### Stay single

When slide projectors were the norm, those who wanted to make the greatest impression used dual projection. While few could compare with Julia Polak’s vivacious manner, many sought to emulate her wide-screen visual extravaganzas. My one and only foray into using dual projection was when I presented the results of a study of non-A non-B (as it was then called) hepatitis in haemophiliacs. The key message was this: despite initial liver biopsies showing low-grade ‘chronic persistent’ hepatitis, repeat biopsies in these patients showed progressive disease with a high risk of cirrhosis. Within the first minute of my presentation, the bulb went in one of the dual projectors! I quickly adapted what I was going to say, and tried to remember the prompts that would have appeared on the now blank half of the screen. If I had stuck with single projection, the risk of technical failure would have been halved and the slide carrier could have been moved to the functioning projector. I have never witnessed dual PowerPoint projection. But I have seen plenty of irritating animation. Remember: it’s the message, not the medium, that matters.

**James Underwood**