

The Founding of *The Journal of Immunology*

The Journal of Immunology (*The JI*), the preeminent peer-reviewed journal in the field of immunology, has served as the official publication of The American Association of Immunologists (AAI) since 1916. Though long “the jewel in the crown” for AAI, *The JI* did not receive its genesis from within the AAI membership or Council. The request for creation of the journal, in fact, arose, from within another society. Thanks to the foresight and organizational skills of Dr. A. Parker Hitchens, the first chairman of the AAI Council, the journal received its association with AAI.

Leaders for the burgeoning professional society were still focused on developing the membership and drafting bylaws following their organizational meeting in 1913 at the American Medical Association meeting in Minneapolis, MN, and the First Annual Meeting in Atlantic City, NJ, in 1914.¹ No mention of founding a journal dedicated to immunology appears in the minutes from either meeting. As was the case for many other small societies, the publishing activities of AAI were limited to publishing reports of its meetings in the journal of a larger society. (AAI published its reports in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.²) Their focus changed quickly, however, in the spring of 1915 with a request from Dr. Arthur Coca of the New York Society for Serology and Hematology (SSH).

Dr. Coca, instructor in Pathology and Bacteriology at Cornell University Medical College, was spearheading a movement to establish a “Journal of Immunity.” Recognizing a potential synergy with the goals of the AAI, Dr. Coca reached out to the AAI Council to see if the society would consider cooperating in founding the journal. It was not wholly surprising that the two societies should cooperate, as they shared many members and Dr. Coca was himself nominated for membership in AAI in 1915. The Council authorized Dr. Hitchens “to represent the society in the negotiation with Dr. Coca”³ Additionally, Council provided Hitchens with the power to act for the Council in any negotiations.⁴ In Dr. Hitchens, the Council could not have made a more apt selection. Hitchens was the secretary of the Society of American Bacteriology (SAB, now the American Society for Microbiology) and would

soon be the first managing editor of the newly founded *Journal of Bacteriology* (*JB*) and the first and only editor of *Abstracts of Bacteriology*.⁵ Furthermore, he negotiated the *JB* contract on behalf of SAB with the publisher Williams & Wilkins Company of Baltimore.⁶ Despite these crucial early engagements on the part of Hitchens and the AAI Council, it was not a certainty that *The JI* would be the official publication of the association.

In his meetings with Coca, Hitchens had become convinced that a journal “devoted to the branch of medical science represented by this Association was about to be established” with or without any involvement of AAI. Further, if such a journal were published without the cooperation of AAI, it would render “superfluous the future publication of an official organ of this Association, and, in this event, our Society would have been seriously handicapped in its future development.”⁷

Still, there were others to convince. New AAI President James Jobling, M.D., Department of Pathology, Vanderbilt University, wrote to Simon Flexner, director of the prestigious Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research (RIMR) expressing his reservations about the prospects of a new journal.⁸ Flexner was an understandable choice as a source of guidance. RIMR had recently taken over the publishing of the prestigious *Journal of Experimental Medicine* from the renowned William Welch. Though the new immunology journal would be “international in character,” Jobling had his doubts that “it would receive sufficient support to justify its existence.” Furthermore, he was “*of the opinion that there are enough journals now.*” Beyond the demand for the new journal, he was demonstrably opposed to “any idea leading to the financial responsibility on the part of the Society.” Jobling’s caution was warranted, for initial costs might well place serious strain on the finances of the young society.⁹

In the fall of 1915, delegations from AAI and SSH met at the new Yale Club in New York City to discuss and, they hoped, finalize a working relationship between the two societies concerning the “Journal of Immunology”, as the proposed new journal was now dubbed. To ascertain the costs associated with the proposed journal, Dr. Coca invited representatives from the publishing services

¹ Prior to the adoption of the Bylaws and Constitution in 1917, The American Association of Immunology was governed by the President and the Council. The early Council included the position of Chairman, who was responsible making sure the Council carried out its proposals and those of the President. The early Council did not have a line of succession to the presidency, as they would after 1917.

² Minutes Annual Meeting, 22 June 1914. AAI Papers, unprocessed. *The Journal of the American Medical Association* regularly published reports from scientific associations that had some relation to medicine.

³ Minutes, 1915 Annual Meeting, 10 May 1915, AAI Archives. Hitchens was a founding member of AAI and chaired the Council until 1919. Editor for *Abstracts of Bacteriology*

⁴ Report upon *The Journal of Immunology*, c. 1916. AAI Papers, unprocessed.

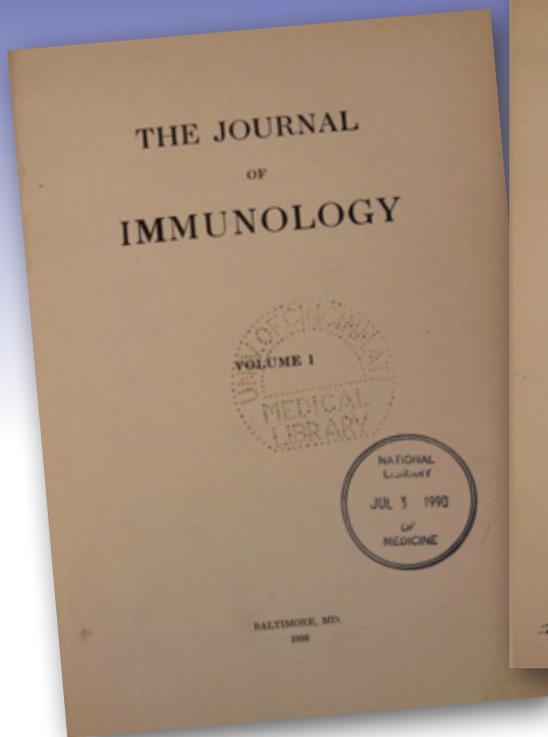
⁵ Hitchens was the Secretary-Treasurer for the Society of American Bacteriology (SAB) in the 1910s and 1920s. He also served as Vice President (1923) and President (1924) of SAB. The SAB was renamed the American Society for Microbiology in December 1960. *The Journal of Bacteriology* was first published in January 1916 and continues today. *Abstracts of Bacteriology* was published from February 1916 until December 1925.

⁶ Claude P. Brown, “Arthur Parker Hitchens, 1877-1949,” *Journal of Bacteriology* 60, no 1 (1950): 2.

⁷ A. Parker Hitchens, “Report upon *The Journal of Immunology*,” c. 1916. AAI Papers, unprocessed.

⁸ The Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research, which opened in 1901, was renamed The Rockefeller University in 1965. Flexner was the first director of RIMR and held the position until 1935.

⁹ James Jobling to Simon Flexner, 5 August 1915, Jobling, James W. fol. 1, Simon Flexner Papers, American Philosophical Society. Emphasis added.



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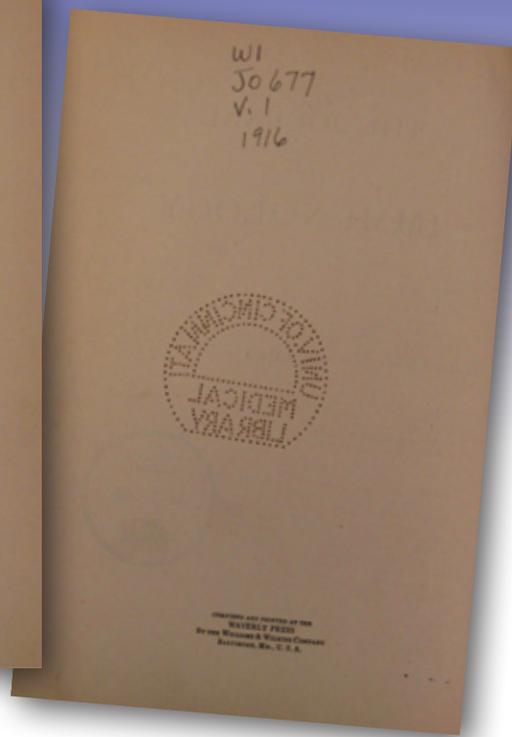
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company, Williams & Wilkins, Co. The meeting yielded positive prospects for the publication of the journal: Dr. Coca was unanimously elected managing editor; a committee to select the Board of Editors was created; and the Advisory Board began taking shape. Despite all the successes at the meeting, the largest unresolved issue still facing the AAI delegation was how the society could finance the journal.¹⁰

Estimated publishing expenses provided to the two societies by Williams & Wilkins, were such that AAI would have to price subscriptions for its sixty-four members at four dollars each to cover costs. Unfortunately, the two-and-a-half year-old society lacked funds in its treasury either to offset the high subscription estimate or cover the deficit guarantee required by the publisher, funds to be held in reserve in case sufficient subscription levels were not reached.

Further complicating the picture was the cap on AAI dues specified in the newly ratified *AAI Bylaws*, which stated, "The dues of the Association shall be fixed annually by the Council and they shall not exceed five dollars." Providing the official journal of the society to members within their dues, as was typical of learned societies, would leave only one dollar of income per member for maintenance of AAI activities. Council members knew that amount was insufficient to support AAI programs.

Hitchens, however, was able to solve both problems without putting the association in financial straits. He did so by suggesting that members desiring the journal could subscribe at the reduced subscription rate of four dollars,

compared to the non-member price of five dollars.¹¹ To address the deficit guarantee, he sent out personal letters to "several of the more interested members, offering them the privilege of guaranteeing individually a fraction" of the fund. He quickly received enough positive responses to meet the demands of the publisher. With the final approval of the Council in May 1916, President Jobling sent a letter out to all AAI members to secure subscriptions.

The first issue of *The Journal of Immunology* was published in February 1916 as a cooperative effort between The American Association of Immunologists and the New York Society of Serology and Hematology. The journal would serve as the official organ for both organizations. It would also provide demarcation of immunology as a separate field in the medical community and create a locus for immunological research from "the best equipped laboratories in this country and England."¹²

In February 1916, the first issue of the new journal was published containing articles on mechanisms of anaphylaxis and immunity to viral and bacterial infections. The first article was "Studies in Anaphylaxis: On the Relation between Precipitin and Sensitizin," by Dr. Richard Weil of Cornell Medical College. The article took a firm stance on the cellular cause of anaphylaxis at a time when the mechanism was hotly debated. Over the years, *The JI* has published many influential articles that have moved the field of immunology forward. In the process, it has fulfilled, if not surpassed, Dr. Hitchens's expressed wishes for the role to be played by the journal: "I believe that my interest in this direction is engendered by my desire to see the Association of Immunologists on a good, sound and influential basis. As I see it, the position I am anxious to have the Association take can scarcely be gained unless the Association has an official organ."¹³

¹⁰ Minutes of joint meeting of AAI and NYSSH Councils, 7 October 1915. AAI Papers, unprocessed.

¹² Announcement of *The Journal of Immunology*, c. 1916. AAI Papers, unprocessed.

¹³ A. Parker Hitchens to Martin Synnott, 16 February 1916. AAI Papers, unprocessed.