## From the Archives

What's old is new again: Early editors of *The JI* act to address perennial challenges in the peer-review and editing process

### By John Emrich and Bryan Peery

he initial challenges of financing and operating The Journal of Immunology (The JI) are well documented in the surviving records from the first two decades of the journal's history. Unfortunately, those records shed far less light on the inner workings of *The JI*. Details concerning such important issues as the responsibilities of the editorial staff, the manuscript submission procedure, and the peer-review process remain less than clear.

What is known is that when The II was founded in 1916, AAI Council elected an editorial staff consisting of an editor, a board of editors, and an advisory board. The editorial process was overseen by Editor Arthur F. Coca (AAI '16), who managed the journal singlehandedly from its founding until 1925 when a second editor, John C. Torrey (AAI '20), was named to help alleviate the strain of a growing workload. The members of the board of editors-usually around 30 immunologists from the United States and the United Kingdom-were responsible for reviewing and editing manuscripts. The advisory board was primarily of older, prominent scientists who had little to no editorial function but served to advise and lend prestige to the nascent journal.

MINUTHS OF THE MEETING OF THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF THE JOURNAL OF IMMEMOLOGY Narch 24th, 1937

The first meeting of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Immunology was held in the Hotel Drake in Chicago at luncheon, Narch 24, 1937. Frement were Sanford B. Hooker, presiding, C. T. Avery, Francis G. Blake, Jacques Bronfenbrenner, Donald T. Fraser, Arthur P. Locke, Carl Ten Broeck, A. B. Wedsworth, A. F. Coca, Faul R. Cennon and the following: Philip Levine, Leo Loeb, Kenneth Goodmer, Frank Kaltaner, all of whom had acted as referees for certain special papers submitted to the Journal. Present as guest of honor was also Ludwig Hektoen, who offered numerous helpful suggestions out of his long editorial experience.

There was an extended discussion of the question whether authors of rejected papers should be informed as to the reason for the rejection. It was the majority opinion that as a rule the reasons for the rejection, as stated by the referees or associate editors, should not be given verbatim to the authors.

There was considerable difference of opinion as to whether papers should be edited for electness of expression. Examples of such editorial revisions were shown to those present. It was agreed that the thorough editorial work of Doctors Hooker, Derry and Hiske, illustrated in the submitted samples, is of great value to the Journal and its readers, and of educational value to the suthors. No formal action was taken on this question.

Respectfully submitted

Arthur F. Coca Mitor-in-Chief

From time to time, the AAI Office of History and Archives will publish an archival document related to the history of the association. Each document will be accompanied by a brief introductory note providing some historical context. Readers interested in learning more about a particular document will find more extensive information in annotations provided in the History section of the AAI website.

> MINUTES OF THE MENTING OF THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF THE JOURNAL OF IMMENOLOGY December 28th, 1937

The second meeting of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Immunology was held in the Hotel Mayflower at dinner, December 25, 1937. Fresent were Oswald T. Avery, George P. Berry, Jacques Bronfenbrenner, Arthur F. Coce, Alphonse R. Dochez, Michael Heidelberger, Sanford B. Hooker, Earl B. McKinley, Stuart Mudd, Thomas M. Rivers, Carl Ten Broeck and Alexander S. Wiener, and also Bernett Cohen, N. Paul Hudson and C.-Z. A. Winslow of the Journal of Bacteriology.

The chief topic of discussion was the same as that at the first meeting. Dr. Goos reported that the editors, especially the associates, have been unnecessarily burdened with the labor of correcting - often prectically rewriting - papers which had been carelessly composed and apparently not given any revision in the institutions in which they had originated. Examples of corrected manuscripts were passed around.

Most of those present, including Drs. Winslow and Cohen, expressed themselves in favor of rigorous editing of the English form as well as of the factual content of accepted papers and approved the suggestion that our members and also institutions from which papers are likely to be received be requested to exert all reasonable influence to have papers carefully revised at their source in accordance with our editorial practice.

Respectfully submitted

Arthur F. Cocs

Arthur F. Code Editor-in-Chief

The structure of the editorial staff remained unchanged for almost two decades, even though its workload nearly doubled in that span of time. In its first five years, The JI was published every two months, averaging approximately 37 scientific articles and 525 pages per year. Between 1929 and 1934, however, the journal was published monthly and averaged approximately 79 scientific articles and 1,035 pages per year. Not only did the number of submissions rise steeply, they also became increasingly specialized and diversified, reflecting the growth of the burgeoning field of immunology. The editorial staff, as initially established in 1916, was no longer able to review and edit the influx of new submissions efficiently and effectively.

On Friday, December 27, 1935, a special meeting of the AAI Council convened in New York City to discuss the restructuring of the editorial staff and peer-review process of *The JI*. A select committee, comprised of Drs. Thomas M. Rivers (AAI '21, president 1933–34), chairman; Stanhope Bayne-Jones (AAI '17, president 1930–31); and Arthur F. Coca presented a "plan of reorganization."

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Historical documents courtesy of The American Association of Immunologists Archive, Bethesda, MD

# AAI LOOKS BACK

The committee proposed restructuring the editorial staff to more efficiently review and edit the greater volume and breadth of manuscripts submitted to *The JI*. Under the new plan, the journal would be managed by an editorial staff consisting of "an Editor in Chief and at least three Associate Editors, with the advice of a Board of Editors," whose members would now be required to reside in North America. The proposal also specified a new process for handling, evaluating, and editing manuscripts. The following is the language used to specify what was to become the first official peer-review process approved by the Council:

- 1. All papers to be sent to the Editor in Chief.
- 2. Editor in Chief to send each paper to a specialist on the Editorial Board, or elsewhere if necessary, for acceptance or rejection. If accepted, the specialist should comment on changes necessary.
- 3. Paper is then sent back to the Editor in Chief.
- 4. From the Editor in Chief, the paper goes to the proper Associate Editor for careful editing and approval.
- 5. The paper is returned to the Editor in Chief.
- 6. The Editor in Chief returns the paper to the author with all the changes made or suggested by the Associate Editor.
- 7. Paper comes back from the author to the Editor in Chief for final approval, who then sends it to the publisher and handles the proof, etc.\*

The Council approved the reorganization and peerreview process at this special December 1935 meeting, voting also to limit papers to 20 printed pages; authors would be required to pay for any pages in excess of the limit. The chief topic of discussion was the same as that at the first meeting. Dr. Coca reported that the editors, especially the associates, have been unnecessarily burdened with the labor of correcting often practically rewriting—papers which had been carelessly composed and apparently not given any revision in the institutions in which they had originated. Examples of corrected manuscripts were passed around.

The first meeting of the new editorial board occurred on March 24, 1937, during the twenty-fourth annual meeting of AAI in Chicago, Illinois. Discussions at the meeting focused on the challenges in handling rejected manuscripts and determining the amount of revising and editing necessary to prepare papers for publication. Unable to resolve these concerns at a single meeting, the board met for a second time on December 28, 1937, in New York City specifically to address the burden of "correcting—often practically rewriting—papers." Evidently, these problems were too big to resolve in 1937, as they continue to cause sleepless nights for editors and authors alike. We present the minutes of the first two editorial board meetings here; an annotated version will be available on the AAI website at www.aai.org/about/history. ■

John S. Emrich, Ph.D., AAI Historian Bryan D. Peery, Ph.D., AAI Assistant Historian

\* Procedures as recorded in the minutes of the special meeting of the AAI Council on December 27, 1935.

After accepting the reorganization plan, the Council sent letters of thanks to the 25 outgoing members of the board of editors and to the advisory board for their service. The new "editorial board" the term adopted by Council to refer to the entire editorial staff—would consist of Coca as the editor-inchief, three associate editors, and a 21-member board of editors. The new staff began its work in January 1936. Of the 25 editorial staff members, 17 had been or would become president of AAI.

### Enjoy the history of AAI at www.aai.org/About/History

#### **AAI Website**

The history section of the AAI website continues to evolve as a living archive. Current resources include:

- AAI history articles published in the AAI Newsletter
- Oral History Project—exclusive interviews offering a rare glimpse into the lives and times of influential immunologists
- Profiles of AAI Nobel and Lasker recipients
- An eBook of commentaries on "Pillars" articles from *The Journal of Immunology*
- AAI StoryBooth—attendees' favorite immunology career recollections, recorded at IMMUNOLOGY 2013<sup>™</sup>