Covering the period from May 6, 1996, through May 5, 1997

Major Changes

Effective with the 1997 volume, Volume 14, MBE is published monthly.

Manuscript Flow

We received 304 submissions during this period, compared with 221 submissions during about the same period (6/1/96-5/31/96) last year. This represents a 37% increase in submitted manuscripts. During this period we accepted 140 manuscripts, compared with 108 during the similar period last year. This represents a 30% increase in accepted manuscripts. Our acceptance rate is thus about 46%. Of the 304 manuscripts received during this period, 98 have been accepted, 109 have been rejected, and 98 are still active.

In 1996 (Volume 13) we published a total of 1,419 pages (compared with the 1,430 pages I projected for Volume 13 in last year's annual report). We have now completed the July 1997 issue and are working on August. At this point we estimate 812 published pages through July, which translates to an estimated 1,400 pages for Volume 14. Volume 13 covered a period of nearly 14 months of submitted manuscripts as a result of the transition from the University of Chicago Press; therefore, the "12-month" equivalent would have been about 1,216 pages in Volume 13. We thus expect to publish about 15% more pages in 1997 than we did over a comparable period in 1996. We are accepting a smaller proportion of submitted manuscripts and are managing to keep papers somewhat shorter on average than we did in 1996.

In summary, 1997 has been a year of significant growth. It is important that Council takes growth into account in projecting the 1998 budget. A 15% growth in 1998 relative to 1997 would mean that we must publish a little over 1,600 pages. Since typesetting costs about $59 per page and we recover on average about $26 per page in page charges, those additional pages will cost the Society about $7,200. We must either be prepared to meet those expenses out of current income levels, thus reducing our income by about $7,200, or we must be prepared to increase our subscription rates. Council must keep in mind that, while our growth reflects the continuing respect enjoyed by MBE, that same growth costs money.

Manuscript Handling Time

Last year at this time our average manuscript handling time (defined as the time from receipt to acceptance, less time for author revisions) was 80 days. I am pleased to be able to tell you that it is now down to an average of 75.6 days for the current volume, Volume 14.

Page Charges

Dick Hudson estimated last year that the actual cost of publication is $59/page. Based on this estimate, I raised the rate for manuscript pages in excess of 10 to $59 ($64 if no disk is included). I will raise the rates for Volume 15 to reflect again the actual cost for pages in excess of 10 based on whatever new estimate Dick Hudson gives me. I urge Council to consider raising the rates for pages fewer than 10 from the current levels of $30/$35 (with disk/without disk) to $35/$40 as a means of dealing with the increased number of pages we are publishing. For the sake of comparison, Genetics is now charging $55 per page with disk and $60 per page without disk.

Associate Editors

As I mentioned to you in my E-mail message nominating candidates for the Editorial Board, I intend to increase the number of Associate Editors from 21 to about 31 in order to cope with the increased manuscript load. I should point out that during the last 12 months our outstanding Associate Editors have handled the 37% increase in manuscript load promptly and essentially without complaint. We owe them a great deal of thanks for their patience.

Appointment of the New Editor

Simon Easteal has been appointed to succeed me as Editor, starting with responsibility for Volume 16 in September of 1998. Simon and I have been in fairly frequent contact, and that will increase as this next year progresses. I urge Council to set aside sufficient funds in the 1998 budget for Simon Easteal to spend one week in Rochester immediately before the Annual meeting in June so that he can see the operation of the Editorial Office firsthand. It will also be important to set aside funds for Simon to set up his office.

Membership and Subscription Rates

In order to obtain favorable mailing rates we must comply with U.S. Postal Service regulations, including details of announcing our membership and subscription rates on our inside cover. The Postmaster has required us to announce separate rates for membership in SMBE and individual (member) subscriptions to MBE. To comply with that requirement I have broken down our membership rates as $10 per year for individual membership and $20 per year for a family membership. Our member subscription rates are individual or family, $60, and student, $42. Technically, it is now possible for someone to join the Society and not elect to receive the journal, but it is an unlikely prospect.
Membership and Subscription Numbers

The April issue was mailed to 1,303 subscribers, including both members and institutions. That can be compared with the April 1996 issue, which was mailed to 1,219 subscribers. By December 1996, the number had grown to 1,445 subscribers. It is obvious that many members delay renewals for several months, so while we cannot be completely sure of our final number of subscribers yet, it seems likely that we will see a modest growth this year, probably on the order of 6%-7%.

Barry G. Hall
May 12, 1997