

New research journals are needed and can compete with titans

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What, Another New Journal? Oh Please, Not That!

This editorial marks the starting point for a new journal, *Temperature*. This latest addition to the Landes Bioscience collection of research journals will be a multidisciplinary publication focused on the interactions between living matter and temperature. The first question, however, that the reader is likely to have is not about the journal's thematic boundaries. The first question is likely to be: "Why do we need another journal?" The News section of *Science* recently published a report about a bogus "research article," which was intentionally packed with deep flaws and then submitted to many new open-access journals; 150 of them rapidly accepted this "piece of wisdom."¹ At first, you may be surprised that so many journals are willing to publish junk, but your surprise will fade away rather quickly when you recollect how many e-mail messages you deleted today that contained an invitation to publish in a new online journal founded by some fairytale magician in a beautiful land far, far away. Don't we already have many (perhaps too many) high-quality, well-established research journals run by authoritative academic societies and published by reputable companies? Surely,

they can satisfy any publishing need imaginable for every scientist who dares to write something!

And so I thought too—initially. But as I thought more, I realized that not all my publishing needs, however modest they may be, are readily met by the good old journals. This editorial will address one feature that is missing from nearly all large journals, at least for people interested in temperature.

What the Good Old Journals Do Not Offer

Over the past 30 y, the *American Journal of Physiology – Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology* (originally, a section of the *American Journal of Physiology*) has been one of my favorite journals. Nearly all prominent scientists in the thermoregulation field—Clark Blatteis, Jack Boulant, Michel Cabanac, Barbara Cannon, Keith Cooper, Carl Gisolfi, Bob Hales, Ted Hammel, Peter Hochachka, Tetsuro Hori, Claus Jessen, Kazuyuki Kanosue, Matt Kluger, Jim Krueger, Helen Laburn, Duncan Mitchell, Taketoshi Morimoto, Ethan Nadel, Tetsuo Nagasaka, Teruo Nakayama, Jan Nedergaard, Tim Noakes, Nancy Rothwell, Evelyn Satinoff, Mike Sawka, Eckhart Simon, and many others—published here, at least occasionally. I considered it a privilege to send my manuscript to it (at that time, we did so by snail mail), and in 1993–94, together with Osamu Shido, I published my first two articles in this journal,^{2,3} both coming from the laboratory of our mentor, Professor Blatteis. Later, I published 30 more pieces in this journal, with various co-authors, and using nearly every publication format available. I served on the Editorial Board of this journal for three terms and, in 2005–2007, I had the honor of working as the Editor for this journal's Call of Papers on Physiology and Pharmacology of Temperature Regulation. According to Pontus Persson, who was the

Editor-in-Chief at that time, this Call was "extremely successful";⁴ the review that summarized the Call⁵ has been cited 247 times (Google Scholar, December 20, 2013). But the most important aspect of my relationship with this journal was that I read it regularly and, starting from the day I took my first independent research position in the United States, subscribed to it. Many issues of that journal contained at least some papers on thermoregulation.

I canceled my subscription a couple of years ago. Over the past years, the way we conduct research and the way we publish research results have both changed drastically. Today, almost no traditional, single-technique thermophysiology laboratories are left. Most scientists use a wide range of methods and techniques, run collaborative multidisciplinary research projects, and change topics of their research frequently—depending on funding. Many belong to multiple scientific societies concurrently, joining and leaving societies as needed—depending on the current track of study. At any point in time, there are a few researchers interested in thermoregulation, but they represent and identify themselves with many different fields: from marine biology to molecular genetics, from nutrition science to neurosurgery, and from parasitology to psychiatry. Furthermore, the turnover rate of this pool of researchers interested in temperature is relatively high. Nowadays, when I glance through the online table of contents of the *American Journal of Physiology – Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology*, I rarely see a paper on thermoregulation.

Would it not be nice to open an issue of a journal and to find a constellation of the latest papers from the leading laboratories in your field of research? And then to go to the front-matter (magazine) section of the same journal and read news about the latest discoveries broadly related to your interest—temperature? And to find a discussion of your recent paper by

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Abbreviations: IF, impact factor; ISI, Institute of Scientific Information

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colleagues? And then run through a report on the latest Physiology and Pharmacology of Temperature Regulation meeting? Perhaps even to find a slide for the class on thermoregulation that you are teaching next week? Or to read a thermoregulation-related anecdote to tell to your students: about Louie Pasteur's experiments with cooling immunized chickens or about the observations of Dominique Jean Larrey, a surgeon in Napoleon's army, who noticed different outcomes in wounded officers (placed close to the camp fire) as compared with wounded soldiers (placed further away, in the cold)?

If you are interested in sciences revolving around temperature, as I am, the answer to all these questions is yes. Yes, it would be nice! But there is no journal today that is dedicated to temperature-related sciences, broadly defined, at least not one that is listed in PubMed, or one that publishes high-quality research, as would be evidenced by high values of journal quality metrics. So you cannot find a constellation of interesting and important papers in a single place. And you cannot find vivid discussions of the latest discoveries in your field. The good old journals are too big and too broad for these tasks. They do not have a critical mass of authors or readers interested in temperature to become an intellectual center, a magnet for thermoregulation-related research. A lack of critical mass of relevant, high-quality research means a lack of all the excitement, discussions, news exchanges, and other great things that grow naturally around any real, full-blooded journal. The lack of such a critical mass is my primary complaint about the journals we have. To be objective, some journals are better than others in this respect. For example, the *Journal of Applied Physiology* gathers a high concentration of human environmental and exercise physiologists and offers them at least some of the services described above, such as analysis, discussion, and promotion of the published contents. But even these are limited services within a limited area of temperature-related sciences.

It is difficult to find a rational answer to the following question: "Why publish an article in a journal where the vast majority of readers are not interested in

your article, and where the vast majority of articles published are of little interest to you?" Your articles are not likely to be discussed on this journal's pages; you are very unlikely to comment on any other articles published; and, sadly, you will never consider subscribing to this journal or even reading an issue of it. Hence, if you are interested in thermoregulation, the *American Journal of Physiology – Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology* (or almost any other good traditional journal) is no longer a journal in the full meaning of this word. It is a depository. It is a mechanism for your article to be processed by a publishing machine and eventually become listed in PubMed.

One may argue that all the features and services that I miss are not needed. One may care less as to what other papers are published in the same issue. One may have no interest in discussing anything on the journal pages, especially when their paper is criticized. And there is nothing wrong with this approach. However, you may be missing an important fact: 10 good papers published in 10 different journals will always remain just that—10 good papers. Ten good papers published and discussed in a single issue bring out some emergent properties; they become more than 10 papers: they stimulate interest, evoke comment, attract students, and promote one another and their entire field of research!

Large society-associated journals have other shortcomings as well. If you put your habitual preferences and expectations aside and start thinking about how you want an ideal, imaginary journal to process and publish your best paper, and what pre- and post-publication services you might expect when sending your best research to a publisher, you will likely discover a few areas in which the good old journals simply do not give you what you may dream about. Here, however, I am not talking about other publishing needs that the current journals do not satisfy. Right now, I will address the immediate objection that some of the readers may have, perhaps you, about the point I have been trying to develop.

Ok, so there is no good full-blooded journal focused on thermoregulation, the readers agree, but what can a small

publisher and an editor not supported by any major society achieve? Open a website that criticizes respected paragons in science publishing? Open another open-access journal, #151, for accepting any bogus article that might fly into its nets? Surely, they cannot produce a journal that could compete in any meaningful way with our beloved society-run journals! No, they cannot, end of story,—the readers conclude.

Can They or Can They Not? Let's Check the Numbers

Let us cut to the chase and use the ultimate magic phrase: the impact factor (IF). After all, not only is it the most important measure of quality of a journal in today's world, but also—rather surprisingly—a better than expected measure of scientific merit of an individual paper published in a journal; for discussion, please see ref. 6. Table 1 shows the latest IFs for several journals. In the first position, I listed the gold standard in thermoregulation research of the past. It is the *American Journal of Physiology – Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology*, the journal to which I often sent my research. It is run by one of the largest and oldest scientific societies in modern history, the American Physiological Society. As a part of the *American Journal of Physiology* (first published in 1898), it is also one of the oldest research journals.

The next five journals in the table are young journals by *Temperature's* publisher, Landes Bioscience, founded by Ronald G. Landes, MD. Dr. Landes told me that, when he, as a young resident, was assisting in surgeries and holding retractors for hours (an experience I am familiar with), he was dreaming about publishing scientific research. He wanted to learn about publishing and to start doing it himself. How many administrators of research societies, or Editors-in-Chief appointed by these societies, became involved with research journals because they were excited about publishing and wanted to learn about the business of making a good publication? One of my favorite books on my shelf is Michel Cabanac's "Human Selective Brain Cooling"—a fascinating story with many important

Table 1. IF values for journals discussed. Some new journals are highly competitive.

#	Journal	Publisher	2010–11 Editor-in-Chief	2012 IF
1	AM J PHYSIOL-REG I	AMER PHYSOL SOC	Curt D. Sigmund	3.284
2	AUTOPHAGY	LANDES BIOSCIENCE	Daniel J. Klionsky	12.042
3	CELL CYCLE	LANDES BIOSCIENCE	Mikhail V. Blagosklonny	5.321
4	MABS-AUSTIN	LANDES BIOSCIENCE	Janice M. Reichert	5.275
5	EPIGENETICS-US	LANDES BIOSCIENCE	Manel Esteller	4.920
6	RNA BIOL	LANDES BIOSCIENCE	Renée Schroeder	4.841
7	ONCOTARGET	IMPACT JOURNALS LLC	Mikhail V. Blagosklonny	6.636
8	AGING-US	IMPACT JOURNALS LLC	Mikhail V. Blagosklonny	4.696
9	PLOS ONE	PUBLIC LIBRARY OF SCIENCE	Not applicable	3.730

Journals' and publishers' names are spelled the way they are abbreviated by the Thomson Reuters' Institute of Scientific Information (ISI). Please note that the ISI abbreviations generally differ from both the corresponding journals' names and PubMed abbreviations. The 2012 IF values (for 2010–11 publications) are shown as calculated by ISI.

dimensions—from human anatomy to evolution to how to measure brain temperature.⁷ It is now sold through Springer, but my copy shows the original publisher: R. G. Landes Company.

Further down, near the bottom of **Table 1**, there are two journals by the tiny partnership called Impact Journals. Both have the same Editor-in-Chief, Mikhail (Misha) V. Blagosklonny. This is the same Mikhail Blagosklonny who serves as the Editor-in-Chief for *Cell Cycle*, one of the first two journals started by Landes Bioscience. He is my fellow classmate from the Ivan Pavlov Medical School in St. Petersburg. After Misha started his journals, my laboratory members (Alex Steiner, Sam Wanner, and Andrés Garami—now all independent scientists) and I started sending occasional pieces in various formats to these journals.^{8–11} Misha has served as my informal adviser, instructing me on various aspects of being an Editor-in-Chief and, for some years, encouraging me to start a new journal, which I have now done. Misha became the godfather of this journal—he gave the journal its name. Ron Landes' favorite was *Thermoregulation*, which is the main focus of this journal, and my favorite was *Temperature and Life*, which is the paraphrased journal's logo. The real name, *Temperature*, came from Misha.

All Landes Bioscience and Mikhail Blagosklonny journals listed in **Table 1** were rapidly accepted to be indexed by Medline and PubMed. Today, the best Landes Bioscience journals become listed

in PubMed in less than a year (with the first issues being listed retrospectively). Later, when they become accepted for coverage by the ISI and have their first IF posted, some surprises may emerge.

Do you have any comments about the comparison made in **Table 1**? Of course you do, and so does the gentleman in the blazer.

Gentleman in the blazer: Cheating! You show only one journal by the American Physiological Society and compare it to the best of Landes Bioscience journals! You are misleading the reader by creating the impression that all Landes Bioscience journals are better than all society-associated journals, which is not true!

Reply: Sorry if I caused any misunderstanding. My point was to show that young journals by a small publisher can compete successfully with well-established journals run by powerful societies, and I used a very solid journal, one I respect a lot, to demonstrate this point. I did not mean to suggest that all small journals are better than all patriarchs and matriarchs of medical and biological publishing. For Landes Bioscience, the journals shown are indeed those with the highest IF. I think they demonstrate clearly what the publisher is trying to achieve and is capable of achieving. For Dr. Blagosklonny's journals, however, a complete record is presented. **Table 1** includes all three journals for which he serves as Editor-in-Chief. (To be precise, he is launching two more journals, one with Impact Journals and

another with Landes Bioscience, but neither has published its first issue at the time of this writing.)

If my point that new journals by a small publisher can, in general, compete successfully with the good old journals is clear, can we move to the next question? Should one publish in a new journal? Is David the name of every little guy who's coming out to face Goliath? Or is he just some little guy?

Going with an Unknown Journal: Personal Experience

In 2006, a multi-year collaborative study from my lab that was led by Alex Steiner (*Temperature* Section Editor) and Andrei Ivanov (Editor-in-Chief of another new Landes Bioscience journal, *Tissue Barriers*) and included Paul Sawchenko's, Kiyoshi Matsumura's, and Shigeo Kobayashi's laboratories was accepted for publication by *PLoS Biology*, the flagship of biological publishing.¹² Uplifted by this success, we submitted another study, run by Camila Almeida (now an independent scientist) and Alex Steiner in my laboratory, in collaboration with Luiz Branco, to the same journal in the summer of 2006. It was rejected. Upon the rejection, we were invited to jump into the unknown—we were offered to have the manuscript redirected to a new, forthcoming journal. We believed in the Public Library of Science team and agreed. The manuscript was accepted for publication at the end of August and then published at the end of

December of 2006, thus starting a new journal.¹³ The journal became popular instantaneously. During the fifth year of its life (2011), it was publishing no less than every sixth paper listed on PubMed! Today, Google Scholar ranks it as the 36th most important journal in the world (Google Scholar uses the *h5*-index for this purpose, which is the *b*-index¹⁴ of articles published by a journal in the last five complete years). The name of this journal is *PLoS One*; I included its IF at the bottom of Table 1.

Whether you like it or not, this journal has revolutionized scientific publishing. In essence, *PLoS One* did what large society-associated journals were already doing for scientists interested in a well-defined topic (e.g., temperature)—it stripped away any remaining journal services of the publication mechanism. But *PLoS One* also went further: it made the peer-review process more rational and objective; it increased the overall efficiency of the publishing mechanism; and it offered all published articles for free to all readers. *Temperature* will not follow the steps of *PLoS One*—our concept is totally different. But I do admire the vision and execution of the *PLoS One* team.

On rare occasions when I get the chance to talk to representatives of the leadership of scientific societies, and the conversation touches upon *PLoS One*, the temperature in the room increases in a rather spectacular fashion. Meanwhile, however, nearly every large society, including the Society for Neuroscience, the American Physiological Society, and The Physiological Society, either is opening or has already opened a journal similar to *PLoS One*.

To bring up an interesting detail, do you remember that 150 open-access journals accepted the bogus article?¹ That same article was sent to *PLoS One*. During technical review, Staff Editors discovered some ethical problems with the article; during scientific review, an Academic Editor rejected the article. Serving as an Academic Editor for *PLoS One* myself, I confirm that I often receive warnings from Staff Editors about various potential problems with a manuscript under review. Going back to the infamous bogus paper, it was accepted by some journals published

by industry titans Elsevier, Sage, and Wolters Kluwer, as well as by some scholarly society journals.¹

To summarize my co-authors' and my experience, we are happy that we made the brave decision and went with a new journal. After us, many scientists published great temperature-related papers in *PLoS One*. To give a few examples: the study from Wouter van Marken Lichtenbelt's group on brown adipose tissue in morbid obesity,¹⁵ the study by Paul Heppenstall and colleagues on the roles of TRPM8 and TRPA1 channels in cold allodynia associated with neuropathy,¹⁶ the study by Drew Harvell and collaborators on the response of sea fan corals to temperature,¹⁷ the report on the evolution of avian air sacs (which is likely to be driven by thermoregulatory needs) from a large international team, with Paul Sereno as the first author,¹⁸ the report from David Julius' laboratory on the evolution of thermal properties of the TRPM8 channel,¹⁹ and the report from Elizabeth Repasky's laboratory on the effects of febrile temperatures on responses of macrophages.²⁰ Today, seven years after we published our study, it is clear to us that our bet on the new little guy, *PLoS One*, was a winning bet.

Our paper also did well—despite the fact that the journal was new and did not have an IF at the time. As the first article published by a new journal, it has attracted a lot of attention: 23,222 number of page views, including 1,000 downloads of full text (checked on the *PLoS One* website on December 20, 2013). It also was reviewed by Robin McAllen for *Faculty of 1000*.

But Will You Submit to *Temperature*?

I will certainly be submitting my papers to *Temperature*. *Temperature* will provide me with services that none of the existing journals can—whether it may be *American Journal of Physiology—Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology* or *PLoS One*. I want to publish my research together with other good papers on thermoregulation, in the same journal, in the same issue. I want my research to be featured and discussed. I want it to be noticed and used. I want my papers to be rewarded with extra citations that come naturally

when the number of papers on related topics is published and discussed together and reaches a critical mass. I also will be using *Temperature*'s unique formats, e.g., Teaching Slide, that other journals do not have. I know that several of my friends, colleagues, and Editorial Board members are already working on preparing these innovative submissions for *Temperature*.

If you join us as a *Temperature* author, you will receive one additional benefit I have not yet mentioned. And it is a big one, in my opinion. You will enjoy the process of publishing in this journal. Please take a look at *Temperature*'s website. The journal's requirements for manuscript formatting are innovative; you are likely to be pleased with several author-centered, labor-saving, convenient features.

Temperature's peer-review process is also different. If one compares peer review to a military campaign—a comparison that may be more realistic than one might want to admit—then the armies serving old society journals employ a lot of horses, bayonets, and tanks, which may work for expansive operations and lengthy sieges, but lack the necessary selectivity and flexibility, and often speed. *Temperature* uses more up-to-date tools; it achieves its goals with carefully calculated instantaneous strikes. The curious reader can find more information on the journal's website.

Temperature's other unique feature is that it will perform a high-quality peer review without relying on consensus among all reviewers and authors. Do you think Galileo would be able to publish his work in a society-associated journal? How would he pass the traditional peer-review system? Here are some examples of recent papers that, as I understand, might have had a difficult time dealing with the consensus-based peer-review process: the original-research paper by YoYo Ootsuka, Bill Blessing, and their colleagues, which introduces the concept of basic rest-activity cycles,²¹ and the multi-author review, with Kaz Kanosue and Larry Crawshaw as first authors, that challenges several consensus views on thermoregulation.²² From what I know, these papers were rejected by multiple journals; one of these was published years (literally) after the initial submission... In both cases, I suspect, the authors needed some special

circumstances (e.g., a meeting in the field that was looking for papers) before they could publish. The funny thing is that, in both cases, the exact same “heliocentric” ideas, sometimes in the exact same form, were still published—eventually. What was the point of trying to reach consensus with “geocentrist” reviewers and editors, sending the papers for repeated rounds of peer rejection, and postponing publication by years? If you have a manuscript like that, do not waste your time with the consensus-based peer review of traditional journals—send it to *Temperature*! *Temperature* has a rapid and robust mechanism (Challenge article) for dealing with such papers.

Will *Temperature* become a good journal? Based on the qualifications and experience of the journal’s team and the quality of the advice it receives, it definitely has a good shot. Everything is in place and ready for accepting the inflow of manuscripts. It is now your turn to step up to the plate and start contributing to the journal—you will be establishing the premiere full-service journal on the topic of your research. In any category available, your manuscript can become inaugural, except, obviously, for the Editorials—you are reading the first one right now.

A Temperature-Related Puzzle for Dessert

I invite the readers of *Temperature* to send us any educational, thought-provoking, or simply curious pieces of information related to temperature—we will find a way to publish them. Here is one such piece—a riddle, which was told to me by Miklós Székely. Share it with your students. A group of rats was fed a low-protein chow and kept at room temperature; all animals died. Another group of rats was fed the same chow but kept in the cold; all survived. How would you explain the phenomenon observed? *Temperature* will publish the winning explanation. The format of any front-matter article can be used to report the answer. Or you can e-mail your answer directly to me,

and the best one will be included in a future editorial. Think about temperature—and keep *Temperature* in mind!

Summary

(1) Most good old journals do not provide the thermoregulation community with a wide range of services expected from a journal. They have become manuscript-processors: processed...moved to PubMed...next! A new, full-service journal is needed, one that will function as a thermoregulation club, discussion forum, intellectual magnet, feedback provider, tutoring center, science news room... *Temperature* is meant to become all of this and more—a home for all your thermoregulation research.

(2) Some new publishers and Editors-in-Chief consistently produce high-quality journals and outperform many good old journals, as measured by the IF. Landes Bioscience, the publisher of *Temperature*, and some Landes Bioscience Editors-in-Chief have outstanding track records—*Temperature* has great advisers.

(3) Going with a new journal may be less “risky” than one imagines—if the journal is well-designed and run by an experienced team. Starting something you believe in can be a rewarding experience. With *Temperature*, not only will you receive a full range of journal services (not available from any other journal), but you are also likely to enjoy the process. Welcome to the world of *Temperature*!

Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest

The author serves as *Temperature* Editor-in-Chief under a contractual agreement with Landes Bioscience. He is a 1994 John F. Perkins Fellow of the American Physiological Society and was reimbursed for travel to meetings by the same society. He published articles exempt of fees in journals of The Physiological Society, American Physiological Society, Landes Bioscience, and other publishers. He has been under contractual agreements with several publishers for book projects. He organized the 3rd International Meeting on Physiology and Pharmacology of

Temperature Regulation (Phoenix, AZ, 2006), which received financial support from multiple entities, including publishers.

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