By the end of 2000 I will be stepping back as the Editor-in-Chief of the *European Journal of Cardio-thoracic Surgery* (EJCTS) to assume the duties of Vice President of the EACTS. Since I took the office of the Editor-in-Chief from Hans Borst in the fall of 1993, our journal has undergone rapid and gratifying changes. The growth of the journal is best documented by continued increase of submissions (Fig. 1), which will exceed 700 manuscripts/year by the end of 2000. This rise in the amount of submitted material had to be met by increasing the number of pages, but also led to irreconcilable difficulties with our previous publisher, Springer-Verlag. In 1997 we changed our publisher to Elsevier and were immediately able to vastly increase the number of pages published (Fig. 2). This also led to rapid reduction of publication times; presently it takes approximately 7 months from submission of the paper to its publication, including editorial assessment, author's revision, final acceptance, and printing. The development of our Association, and especially acknowledgement of our journal as the official publication of the European Society of Thoracic Surgeons led to a substantial increase in the number of subscriptions, which are now approaching 2000 (Fig. 3). The substantial increase in the editorial workload led to the reorganisation of the editorial office in 1996, which was most ably accomplished by Ian Beecroft, Managing Editor of the EJCTS.

From the very beginning of my editorship, it was clear that the Editor-in-Chief would not be able to assess competently all the material submitted to the journal. I was honoured that Keyvan Moghissi and Axel Haverich consented to act as Associate Editors in charge of thoracic surgery and transplantation, respectively. Special praise must be given to Keyvan Moghissi: in the last 7 years he alone assessed and reviewed approximately 1/4 of all submissions to the journal, and his contributions to the growth of the journal are truly magnificent. The further increase of submissions led to the realisation that additional Associate Editors would have to be nominated to reduce the workload of the Editor-in-Chief. In the past 2 years the Journal was most ably helped by Jean Bachet in the field of thoracic vascular surgery, Pascal Vouhé in congenital, Robert Dion in coronary and Manuel Antunes in vascular surgery, and Kumarasingham Jeyasingham for the papers arriving from the European Society of Thoracic Surgeons. These Associate Editors, together with the members of the Editorial and Advisory Boards as well as many other reviewers should be given full credit for the rapid and successful growth of the EJCTS.

Each journal receives a mixture of excellent, good, mediocre and substandard submissions. It is the duty of the Editor-in-Chief to perform an impartial assessment of the manuscripts, to judge their scientific validity, assure a professional statistical assessment, and to present the readership with interesting and original material. It is also his duty to prevent dissemination of dangerously misleading and erroneous information through the peer-reviewing process. I have always considered EJCTS to be the journal for practising cardio-thoracic surgeons; therefore I have tried to select the manuscripts not only for their originality and scientific quality, but also for their clinical relevance. During my tenure of office, we have gradually applied increasingly stricter criteria for acceptance of manuscripts,
which is reflected in the decline of our acceptance rate since 1994 (Fig. 4). At present, less than 50% of the papers submitted to EJCTS will eventually be published; and the acceptance ratio for case reports, which are seldom original or instructive, is presently only 25%.

The success of a scientific journal is measured not by its size, its circulation or financial income, but primarily by its impact factor. Although the Editor-in-Chief cannot produce high-quality manuscripts for his journal himself — he depends on the authors to do this work — the impact factor is considered to be the major criterion by which the editor’s work is assessed. The struggle to increase the impact factor of EJCTS has been a long and protracted one, and it is still going on (Fig. 5). In 1999 our impact factor finally increased to 1.134, which leaves us behind our two major competitors, but finally with a very healthy increase which — I am confident — will continue in the coming years. The drop of the impact factor in 1998 reflects the large number of papers, which we had to publish in 1997 to reduce our backlog of unpublished manuscripts; this in turn led to the numerical dilution of the quotations.

The major recent change in the EJCTS was the introduction of electronic submission and reviewing, which was most ably instituted by Ian Beecroft in co-operation with RCP from the UK. This endeavour makes us one of the leaders in the field of web-assisted publishing; it was a logical step, but technical difficulties in its implementation should not be underestimated. Electronic manuscript submissions are rapidly increasing, which reflects the popularity of this modern method of communication. We are confident that the web reviewing will shorten publication times and improve communication with the authors; if the present trend continues, in the next year a large majority of our submissions will be web-based.

EACTS made a wise decision to appoint Ludwig von Segesser as my successor; I have no doubts that he will lead our journal to new peaks of quality and innovation. My last act as the Editor-in-Chief is the public acknowledgement of my sincere gratitude to our Managing Editor, Associate Editors, members of the Editorial and Advisory Board, Assistant Editors and all our reviewers, who have strongly supported my work in the difficult formative period of the journal. A special words of thanks goes to Tom Ferguson, Past Editor of the Annals of Thoracic Surgery: his friendly advice and firm guidance led to close common effort between The Society of Thoracic Surgeons, American Association of Thoracic Surgery and European Association for Cardio-Thoracic Surgery, and to active co-operation between our respective journals.

CTSNet is becoming one the most important sources of rapid, readily available general information for cardio-thoracic surgeons. Society of Thoracic Surgeons and its Past President, Robert Replogle should be given full credit for initiating this effort, and Peter Greene for developing and supervising the impressive growth of this new medium.
Through the association with High-Wire Press from Stanford, CA, we were able to put EJCTS on the web and give our readers access to full text of the journal. I am convinced that the web accessibility to scientific journals is only the first step in a tremendous information revolution, which we are now witnessing. For an editor it is obvious that the full potential of the web for dissemination of scientific information is still grossly under-utilised. Addition of movement, colours and sound, coupled with the possibility of instant discussion and comments, offer obvious advantages in the dissemination of new knowledge in a technically oriented science like cardiothoracic surgery. Although printed journals will remain the mainstay of scientific publishing, it is obvious that we are approaching viable alternatives to this classic method of information exchange, and it will be our task to further develop this exciting, new aspect of the CTSNet.

Marko Turina
(Retiring Editor-in-Chief)