During 2005, FEMS Microbiology Reviews published three regular issues covering a wide range of microbiological topics and two thematic issues dealing with bacterial genomes and lactic acid bacteria. This was the last year in which this journal was published by Elsevier. I am grateful for all the excellent support from Elsevier which contributed substantially to establishing FEMS Microbiology Reviews as a highly influential journal in the field of microbiology.

Starting in January 2006, FEMS Microbiology Reviews, together with the rest of the FEMS journals, will be published by Blackwell Publishing. This new era provides a challenging opportunity to increase the impact and visibility of the Journal. With a new layout and format, we will continue publishing on subjects of current microbiological interest, covering them in a comprehensive, critical and authoritative way. FEMS Microbiology Reviews issues will now be published bi-monthly and the expertise of the Editorial Board has been expanded to cope with the additional papers.

The entire world of life sciences is experiencing, once more, the influence of microbiology. The availability of many fully sequenced microbial genomes provides us with important insights into basic questions, ranging from the early stages of life to the pattern of evolution that gave rise to the actual biodiversity that we encounter today. Sophisticated genomic, proteomic and bioinformatic tools can be used to further analyze this biodiversity and the activities of microbial communities and consortia in particular ecological niches. As a result, a more interrelated and holistic vision of microbiology is emerging which should lead to new concepts and applications. The actual experimental knowledge based on a few, well-characterized systems should be enlarged. This is important for establishing experimental grounds for the comparative analyses implemented by bioinformatics, genomics and proteomic tools. The opportunities created by biotechnology in many productive sectors, and the impact of microbiology on human health in an increasingly interrelated world, have also promoted public interest in our science.

To underline the impact of microbiology in human life is, in fact, the main objective of the second FEMS Congress that will be held in Madrid, Spain, from 4 to 8 July 2006. Its excellent program (www.fems-microbiology.org/congress) integrates basic knowledge with more applied perspectives, and underlines important areas of research that will eventually be reflected in influential reviews published in our Journal.

Finally, a warm welcome to the new editors and thanks to the authors, reviewers, editors, guest editors and editorial staff that during the past year contributed to maintaining the high standards of our Journal.

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