Our Journal—2020: What and How We Publish

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Abstract—This is a brief review of the latest changes in the editorial policy and content of the Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta, Seriya 16: Biologiya journal with special emphasis on the situation with its English-language version Moscow University Biological Sciences Bulletin. The current strategy of the editorial board for evaluation of submitted manuscripts, their rejection, peer reviewing and editing, and the distribution of papers among new sections of the journal are described. The article discusses the requirements for the language of articles, compilation of reference lists, and statistical analysis of the data obtained by the authors. Information is provided on the growth of scientometric indicators of the journal in recent years as well as a list of databases in which the periodical is currently indexed. Differences in interest in published articles between foreign and domestic readers are noted. Data on the number of downloads of the most popular articles from the Springer Nature website are provided. The article analyzes the topics of articles published in the journal in 2017–2019. The authors emphasize the priority for the editorial board of reviews affecting both fundamental and applied aspects of research in the field of biology, biomedicine, and biotechnology.

Keywords: scientific publications, editorial policy, peer review, reference lists, scientometric indicators, article downloads, Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta “Seriya 16: Biologiya,” Moscow University Biological Sciences Bulletin, review

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In the last few years, our journal has undergone significant changes. They have affected both its Russian (Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta, Seriya 16: Biologiya) and English (Moscow University Biological Sciences Bulletin) versions. In this brief editorial review, we would like to analyze these changes and consider their preliminary results. To see our periodicals in more detail and assess their scientometric indicators, please visit the appropriate Internet sites:

for the English version:
https://www.springer.com/journal/11966
https://link.springer.com/journal/11966
https://www.scopus.com/sourceid/21100204913
https://www.scimagojr.com/journal-search.php?q=21100204913&tip=sid&clean=0
https://www.pleiades.online/en/journal/bbscimgu

for the Russian version:
https://vestnik-bio-msu.elpub.ru/jour
https://elibrary.ru/title_about.asp?id=8371

1 M.P. Kirpichnikov is the Editor-in-Chief of the journal Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta, Seriya 16: Biologiya/Moscow University Biological Sciences Bulletin, G.V. Morgunova is the Managing Editor of the editorial board, and A.N. Khokhlov is the Associate Editor-in-Chief.
Unfortunately, we often receive manuscripts written in poor Russian language. This greatly complicates the work of not only reviewers and editors but also translators working on the English version of the article. As a result, this is reflected on the quality of publications in the *Moscow University Biological Sciences Bulletin* journal, which is of particular interest for us and for our readers, because its articles, first of all, are available to a wide international audience and, secondly, are indexed in a number of scientometric databases (data taken from the Springer Nature publishing house website): AGRICOLA, EBSCO Discovery Service, EM Biology, Gale, Gale Academic OneFile, Gale InfoTrac, Google Scholar, Institute of Scientific and Technical Information of China, Japanese Science and Technology Agency (JST), Meta, Naver, OCLC WorldCat Discovery Service, ProQuest Biological Science Database, ProQuest Central, ProQuest Natural Science Collection, ProQuest SciTech Premium Collection, ProQuest-ExLibris Primo, ProQuest-ExLibris Summon, SCImago, and SCOPUS.

Indexing the journal in these databases has attracted to us a large number of biologists who are interested in obtaining grants from research foundations, which take into account the scientometric indicators of publications.

In this regard, it should be noted that a few years ago our journal was intended primarily for the staff of the School of Biology, Moscow State University. However, we decided to expand the geographical diversity of the articles accepted for publication, focusing on the requirements of international global citation systems. As a result, our journal is now open to researchers from all scientific organizations of different countries. The only condition is that the manuscript submitted to the editorial board should be written in Russian. Further translation of articles into English by authors themselves is welcome, because this greatly facilitates the work of translators and editors of the English version. In 2017–2019, we published a number of articles coauthored by our colleagues from Italy [1, 2], the United States [3–6], China [2, 7], Poland [8], RSA [9], Vietnam [10], Ukraine [11], Canada [12], and other countries.

Due to the fact that fundamental reviews turned out to be most popular among our readers, this type of article is now a priority for us. We strive to order such reviews from the leading experts in respective fields both in Russia and abroad.

As noted above, the number of studies currently performed at the intersection of several disciplines is steadily increasing. Given the specifics of our journal, we now make efforts to also publish articles (both review and experimental) devoted to biological research aimed at solving important medical problems faced by humanity. In particular, we have recently published several papers devoted to the use of Carnoy’s solution and its modifications to reduce the number of recurrences after surgical removal of keratocystic odontogenic tumors and ameloblastomas [13], correlation of malnutrition in early life and the risk of diabetes type 2 development [11], various methodological aspects of using biocompatible polymers as tissue-engineering structures [14, 15], the study of new alloys promising in terms of creating bone implants [12], gene therapy methods used for treatment of inherited epidermolysis bullosa [16], and the development of experimental cellular systems to search for drugs [17, 18].

Since the spectrum of scientific fields covered in articles has immeasurably grown (10–15 years ago we mainly published studies performed by methods of classical biology), peer reviews of manuscripts submitted to the editorial board has actually become the most time-consuming part of our work. Firstly, the search for professional reviewers requires a lot of effort and time, because most scientists are very busy in their own research and often refuse to review. Secondly, the process of repeated anonymous (at least to the authors) exchange with notes and respective corrections between reviewers and authors of articles may continue for several months. We have created a corresponding database of reviewers (and we are extremely grateful to all colleagues for their invaluable assistance). However, unfortunately, we cannot appeal to them more often than 1–2 times a year, otherwise they will simply cease to cooperate with us. Thus, the search for new reviewers is a continuous process. The situation is complicated by the fact that sometimes reviewers having no time for a detailed analysis of manuscripts just send formal positive reports that we do not take into account and have to send such articles to another expert. All this leads to certain delays in publishing articles.

It should be said that the percentage of manuscripts rejected in the “rapid rejection” mode (i.e., before reviewing) has significantly grown in the past few years. This is primarily due to the fact that, when we started to accept articles not only from Moscow State University but also from any other research institutions and, besides, our scientometric indices significantly increased, our editorial board began to receive a lot of obviously poor articles rejected by other journals or just written by the authors for whom the Russian language is not native. In such cases, we have to inform the authors that their manuscript cannot be considered by the editorial board and sent for review without substantial linguistic processing. Unfortunately, similar problems are observed with the statistical data processing performed by authors, which is often quite insufficient. As a result, we currently reject without reviewing at least 50% of articles. Given the large number of negative reviews, this figure sometimes reaches 80%.

We would also like to say a few words about the lists of references. According to the requirements of inter-
Table 1. Articles from the *Moscow University Biological Sciences Bulletin* journal that were most frequently downloaded from the SpringerLink website (2017–2019)

| Year | Article                                                                 | Authors                                                                 | Number of downloads by the beginning of 2020 | Reference |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 2017 | Culture Medium pH and Stationary Phase/Chronological Aging of Different Cells | G.V. Morgunova, A.A. Klebanov, F. Marotta, and A.N. Khokhlov              | 397                                           | [1]       |
|      | Does Aging Have a Purpose?                                              | A.N. Khokhlov, A.A. Klebanov, and G.V. Morgunova                         | 253                                           | [19]      |
|      | Purification of Protein–DNA Complexes by Native Gel Electrophoresis for Electron Microscopy Study | M.E. Valieva, N.I. Derkacheva, and O.S. Sokolova                         | 155                                           | [20]      |
|      | Comparative Analysis of the Effect of Stimulation with a Binaural Beat and Similar Kinds of Sounds on the Falling Asleep Process: A Brief Note | D.E. Shumov, G.N. Arsen’ev, D.S. Sveshnikov, and V.B. Dorokhov          | 110                                           | [21]      |
|      | Malnutrition in Early Life and Risk of Type 2 Diabetes: Theoretical Framework and Epidemiological Evidence | O.G. Zabuga and A.M. Vaiserman                                          | 103                                           | [11]      |
| 2018 | Cell Kinetic Approaches to the Search for Antiaging Drugs: Thirty Years After | A.N. Khokhlov                                                          | 288                                           | [18]      |
|      | On Choosing Control Objects in Experimental Gerontological Research    | A.N. Khokhlov, A.A. Klebanov, and G.V. Morgunova                         | 257                                           | [22]      |
|      | Role of Reactive Oxygen Species in Inflammation: A Minireview          | M.A. Chelombitko                                                        | 158                                           | [23]      |
|      | Impairment of the Viability of Transformed Chinese Hamster Cells in a Nonsubcultured Culture under the Influence of Exogenous Oxidized Guanoside is Manifested Only in the Stationary Phase of Growth | G.V. Morgunova and A.A. Klebanov                                        | 108                                           | [24]      |
|      | Regulation of the Actin Cytoskeleton Transformation in the Cell by ARP2/3 Complex. Review | A.S. Chemeris, A.V. Vakhrusheva, N. I. Derkacheva, and O.S. Sokolova    | 63                                            | [25]      |
| 2019 | Studies into the Effect of “Mild” Uncoupling with 2,4-Dinitrophenol on the Growth of Chinese Hamster Cell Culture and Its Subsequent Dying out in the Stationary Phase | G.V. Morgunova, A.F. Karmushakov, A.A. Klebanov, and A.N. Khokhlov       | 78                                            | [26]      |
|      | Corticospinal Excitability in Humans during Motor Imagery Coupled with Functional Electrical Stimulation | L.V. Yakovlev, N.V. Syrov, E.Yu. Morozova, and A.Ya. Kaplan             | 53                                            | [27]      |
|      | The Use of Carnoy’s Solution and Its Modifications for Reducing the Number of Recurrences after Surgical Removal of Keratocystic Odontogenic Tumors and Ameloblastomas: A Systematic Review | V.V. Lebedev and S.B. Butsan                                           | 53                                            | [13]      |
|      | Decontamination of Diatom Algae Cultures Contaminated with the Kinetoplastid *Bodo saltans* Ehrenberg, 1832 | N.A. Davidovich, O.I. Davidovich, Yu.A. Podunay, S.L. Polyakova, and R. Gastineau | 48                                            | [8]       |
|      | Comparative Research into the Effect of Vitamins A and E on the Differential Leucocyte Count and the Morphometric Parameters of Lymphocytes in Carnivorous Mammals (Carnivora) | I.V. Baishnikova, L.B. Uzenbaeva, V.A. Ilyukha, A.G. Kizhina, E.F. Pechorina, and T.N. Ilyina | 44                                            | [28]      |
national scientometric databases, references in scientific papers should be available to scientists from different countries. This means that a reader should be able, firstly, to easily find the cited work on the Internet and, secondly, to read it. However, the lists of references in many of the above-mentioned “poor” articles often consist of abstracts from proceedings of little-known Russian-language regional conferences and references to dissertations and hardly accessible books or manuals. As a result, after the translation of the manuscript into English, the entire list of references, in fact, becomes unreadable, and references are inaccessible for an English-speaking reader. In view of this fact, we have decided to strongly recommend our authors to include in the lists of references primarily the references that can easily be found and read by our potential readers on the Internet. References to Russian-language tutorials and similar literature can be used only in exceptional cases, when alternative English-language sources do not exist in principle.

Although we still accept articles sent by e-mail, many of the authors use the electronic editorial office on the website https://vestnik-bio-msu.elpub.ru. It still does not provide all the opportunities offered by the electronic editorial offices of large international publishing houses, but we continue to work on its improvement.

Table 1 shows data on downloads of articles from the Springer Nature website (https://vestnik-bio-msu.elpub.ru). For each year, we listed the five most popular publications. It should be borne in mind that the earlier an article was published, the greater the number of downloads of it just because it was available longer to readers, and a direct comparison of statistics for different years is not quite correct. In addition, data for 2019 are incomplete, because they do not include articles from no. 4, which had not yet been posted on the Internet by the time of publishing this review. Interestingly, the structure of such data for the articles of the Russian version (https://vestnik-bio-msu.elpub.ru/jour) is very different from what can be seen in Table 1. In our opinion, these differences are associated, firstly, with the difference in the mentality of Russian and foreign readers and, secondly, with a different approach to the analysis of popularity on these sites. Springer Nature analyzes only downloads of the full texts (for those who do not have a subscription such downloads are always paid regardless of the date of publication of articles). The site of the Russian version provides only the statistics of views of summaries of articles. By the way, downloads of articles in Russian are free but become available only 1 year after publishing. Curiously, the most popular article among the domestic readers (more than 1600 views) is the article by V.N. Anisimov and G.M. Zharinov dedicated to the average age of death and longevity of male scientists of various specialties, which was published in 2016. Foreign readers show considerably less interest in this publication; apparently, they are much more attracted by both reviews and experimental works that touch upon serious applied medical and biotechnological problems currently faced by humanity.

The fields of science that are most often touched upon by the authors of the journal include structural biology [29–32], brain–computer interfaces [27, 33, 34], gerontology [19, 22, 35, 36], and various aspects of virological studies [37, 38]. The articles devoted to biomedical research were already mentioned above. In addition, we also continue publishing articles dealing with classical biological research [9, 39]. Recently, we have even published an article on the study of biological objects in space [40].

To date, the English version of our journal, Moscow University Biological Sciences Bulletin, has a CiteScore index (impact factor in Scopus) equal to 0.62 and is included in the Q3 quartile in all three thematic areas in which it is indexed—Agricultural and Biological Sciences; Biochemistry, Genetics, and Molecular Biology; Environmental Science. Detailed information is available at the following links:

https://www.scopus.com/sourceid/21100204913
https://www.scimagojr.com/journal-search.php?q=21100204913&tip=sid.

We hope that the growth of our scientometric indicators will continue and we will soon get into the Q2 quartile at least in one of Scopus subject areas.

To conclude, we would like to invite to cooperation our colleagues from various institutions in Russia and other countries, both as authors of published articles and as members of the Editorial Board and Advisory Board of the journal, the expansion of which is one of our priorities for the near future.

COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Data on downloads of articles (by the beginning of February 2020) were taken from the official website of the Springer publishing house.

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