

The first report card

Eight months after *Nature Methods*' launch, it was time for an opinion poll. Knowing what readers think of the journal and how they use it is crucial to guide its development. So, we have surveyed by e-mail a large, representative sample of readers. We would like to thank all of those—some 7,000 scientists worldwide—who have taken the time to answer our questions and provide comments that will help shape the future of the journal. As we analyze the results, we would like in turn to comment on the results and some points you raised regarding scope and editorial criteria.

First, allow us to say that, overall, we are very pleased with the survey results. If you wish to take a look, a summary of the results will be on our website for a month (www.nature.com/nmeth). A great source of satisfaction for us are the numbers showing that a large majority of survey participants trust the quality of the scientific information in our pages and consider that *Nature Methods* has a fairly good balance of content across disciplines. But our intention is not to rest on these laurels, and with your opinions in mind, we put a list of action points on our agendas.

Many commented on the scope of the journal, a few arguing that it was not focused enough, others requesting that it be expanded to match the breadth of topics covered in *Nature* itself. From the onset, focusing on the life sciences, more precisely on development of tools for biological and biomedical research, was a deliberate choice driven by the aim to cover a range of topics sufficiently broad to foster exchanges between disciplines but not too large as to spread the matter too thin.

In fact, the journal's audience of 60,000 comprises 80% biologists and almost 20% chemists, and this does influence its content. Chemists, although a minority, constitute an important part of our audience and authorship, as more and more methods are developed by chemists working at the interface with biology. *Nature Methods* provides these researchers with an opportunity to address a mainly biological but diverse audience and thus benefit from the unique exposure.

We were pleased to see that the diversity of content across disciplines within the life sciences has

been overall widely appreciated: a large number of readers do find it interesting to read *Nature Methods* papers in and outside their direct area of expertise, and Research Highlights are overall the most-read section. Some commented that being exposed to techniques from other disciplines helps them stay connected with the work done by colleagues, learn about technologies that they may want to use for their own research one day, or prepare them early in their careers to switch to other fields. Our hope is that this interdisciplinary reading will inspire novel approaches and catalyze creativity.

This said, we take your point and will continue to work on improving the balance of subjects and also will include some of the survey respondents' additional suggestions. Among the most frequently requested fields were neuroscience, protein chemistry, immunology, imaging, microbiology and virology—all areas that we want as a part of our portfolio.

According to the survey numbers and comments, the Protocols, published in collaboration with Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, are extremely popular. It is important to note that Protocols differ from Articles and Brief Communications not only by their format but also in terms of selection criteria. Articles and Brief Communications are meant to be the primary description of a method in the literature. In contrast, Protocols are selected from among methods that already have a track record of success. Typically, Protocols are intended to make more widely available methods whose application has already led to several important publications but yet remain technically challenging and mastered only in a limited number of laboratories.

More entries on our "to do" list as a result of the survey are: more Reviews focused on established methods, a forum in addition to the Correspondence section to comment on Protocols and Articles, and more efforts to provide with each paper all information necessary to repeat the method while maintaining the short format popular with busy readers.

And with this list, we are going back to work! Once again, thank you for taking the time to give us your opinions. Your comments are valued; please, keep them coming—we want to hear from you.