

1987-2002

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years

Back to the Beginning

by Stefan Schuber

In retrospect, certain technical developments seem to carry along with themselves space for the media and trade press that will serve their information needs. Consider this script: By a happy confluence of technology and timing, 15 years ago a number of researchers seemed to crack open a new field, and by dint of genius, application, perseverance, and perhaps a few fortuitous events, the ancient art of fermentation became bioprocessing.

Rarely, as Thomas Kuhn reminded us many years ago, do scientific revolutions truly occur. Still, the differences between traditional small-molecule therapeutics and the new biotechnology products were so demonstrably clear that one could not help but notice. All aspects of the pharmaceutical industry, from discovery through scale-up, manufacturing, and delivery — to say nothing of regulation and approval — were experiencing quantum changes. Even the vocabulary (especially the vocabulary) was undergoing a marked change: monoclonal antibodies, electrophoresis, cytokines, and more isoenzymes than one knew what to do with. So 15–16 years ago the promise of this new or at least revitalized biotechnology seemed so obvious, so full of promise that the only real questions had to do with which of several imagined futures were going to be realized first.

So publisher Ed Aster really didn't have substantive doubts about launching *BioPharm*: Clearly a biopharmaceutical industry was in formation; technical information was being generated and required timely dissemination; and — not least of a publisher's considerations — a vendor community was eager to reach practitioners in this new field. Thus my editorial remit as startup editor of *BioPharm* was pretty straightforward: Assemble an Editorial Advisory Board of key researchers and thought leaders in the biopharmaceutical industry, identify key trends and developments in applied biotechnology, and publish must-read articles on these topics.

Assembling the first Editorial Advisory Board and authors for the first few issues of a new journal is among the most terrifying professional experiences that an editor will have. One is constantly challenged, one's assumptions are probed, and one's status as an outsider is a constant liability. On the positive side, however, the mission of a journal is to bridge the gap between groups who have information and those who need or can use it. So it may help to bear in mind that the first title of the journal was *BioPharm Manufacturing* because we wanted to ensure that no one missed the point that our focus was all and only on the practical results of this nascent science for those who were grappling with its real-world applications.



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One of the most rewarding editorial aspects of launching *BioPharm*, I found, is that when a journal is launched at the right time for the right group and is working to its best effect, it really helps unite and becomes a tool for a community of practitioners engaged in the life-altering pursuit of new knowledge. I don't think we're taught this and no one encourages us to observe how we go about creating it, but in our activities we build communities, we assemble, we organize, and we collect around like-minded individuals. By the same token, we police ourselves, and we create ways to disagree. And when a journal is doing its job well, it captures these diverse threads, disseminates them, fosters discussion, challenges readers, and, one hopes, leaves them with a few ideas they didn't have before.

Thus, I hope, *BioPharm*: I'm grateful for the opportunities I had on the project. I met some remarkably talented and intelligent individuals during the launch and later working with editorial advisors, conference personnel and speakers, authors, readers, and members of the community I just mentioned. I also got to work with some talented editors who taught me values to which, alas!, I am still aspiring.

Finally, as an editor and as a reader I believe that the success of a journal is never a static achievement. Each issue for each reader is an individual judgment and accomplishment, and so the challenge I would put in front of my friends on the *BioPharm* editorial/production crew is — back to work!

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NOTE: The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author and do not reflect those of the U.S. Pharmacopeia. BPI

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