Introducing *Neuro Forum*, a Section for Young Neurophysiologists

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While *Journal of Neurophysiology* is beloved by most senior and mid-career researchers in our field, I’m concerned that the next generation will not share this feeling unless their participation is more actively encouraged. Are there editorial initiatives that might help to address this issue? Starting in Fall 2006, the *Journal of Neuroscience* made an effort along these lines that we aim to emulate and adapt. They have a manuscript type (which they call “Journal Club”) for graduate students and postdocs to independently write brief commentaries on interesting, recently published papers in *Journal of Neuroscience*. These are reviewed by the Editors and are turned around quickly, so that the commentary can appear within 2 months of the target article.

At *Journal of Neuroscience*, the quality of these articles has been inspiring, and the feedback from students and postdocs to former *Journal of Neuroscience* Chief Editor Gary Westbrook (who launched the initiative) has been “uniformly positive.” In my own conversations with students and postdocs, they love the idea, conveyed by this mechanism, that they are being taken seriously as full participants in the scientific endeavor. In my view, adapting this article format is an excellent way to engage junior scientists with the field of neurophysiology and with *Journal of Neurophysiology* in particular. Of course, the hope is that the students and postdocs who participate in this process will become lifelong contributors, reviewers, and editors for *Journal of Neurophysiology*.

Rather than simply replicate the *Journal of Neuroscience*’s effort, our initiative, titled “Neuro Forum,” will allow for a somewhat broader range of submissions. First, there will be works that summarize, contextualize, and evaluate a recent paper from the current literature. However, unlike the Journal Club format, we propose to allow the authors to draw from recent work in *any* journal. Second, there will be mini-reviews that summarize and integrate work on a dynamic topic in neurophysiology.

For single target article submissions, the target article may have been published in any journal within the past 3 months (at the time of submission). The target article will most typically be an exciting finding in some area of neurophysiology, broadly defined, but could also include work from other areas of neuroscience of compelling interest to neurophysiologists such as neuroanatomy, neurochemistry, genetics, disease models, or neural computation. For mini-review submissions, significant advances in the field must have been published within the last year. Submissions, both those based upon single target articles and mini-reviews, are limited to 3 printed pages (this corresponds to ~3,000 words) including a maximum of 12 references and one original schematic/explanatory figure. The Editor in Chief and Associate Editors will conduct reviews of submissions, occasionally sending them for external review. Manuscripts will be evaluated for scientific accuracy, logic, clarity, and general interest. Successful submissions will not merely summarize the target articles, but will evaluate them critically, place them in scientific context, and suggest further lines of inquiry.

Manuscripts requiring major revisions cannot be accepted due to time constraints. While accepted manuscripts will receive feedback for minor revision, rejected manuscripts will not receive detailed reviews. No submission fee is required, and no page charges or color charges will be levied. Please see the Editor’s page (http://www.the-aps.org/publications/jn/neuroforum.htm) for detailed guidelines. Please feel free to contact me (dlinden@jhmi.edu) with queries about the format or specific potential target articles or mini-review topics. We hope to publish the first Neuro Forum articles in the December 2008 or January 2009 issues of *Journal of Neurophysiology*.

So, if you are a student or postdoctoral fellow, please be a trailblazer and submit your best efforts to Neuro Forum. If you are faculty, please encourage your students and postdocs to contribute and help them by suggesting target articles or topics. Like any new publishing endeavor, there is a major “founder effect.” If we can publish strong Neuro Forum pieces in the first year, then this will attract more high-quality submissions and establish a positive feedback loop. Thanks in advance for your support for what I know will be an exciting new initiative.

Or, in the words of the bard…

*All the young dudes*
*Carry the news*
*Boogaloo dudes*
*Carry the news*

–David Bowie, “All the Young Dudes”

*Of course, being impeccably politically correct folk, we at *Journal of Neurophysiology* are adopting the word “dudes” in its most inclusive sense (women, men, transgendered persons, emergent properties of the youthful hive-mind. . .)