Culture

Culture – A Short History

David Post
Founding member of the Culture Editorial Board

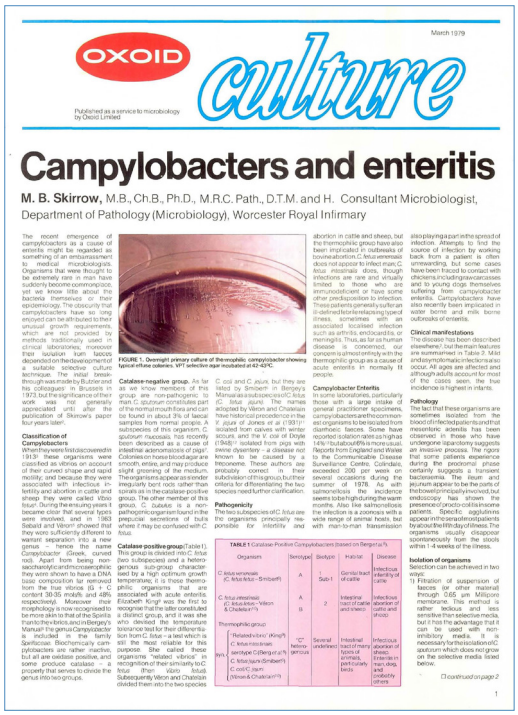
Culture has been publishing expert reviews for those interested to learn about areas of microbiology outside their immediate concerns for over 35 years. From the outset it was important that Culture became known for its science content and the publication has continued to track advances in microbiology until the present day. Various modifications to style occurred over the years but always this original concept was retained; this has been remarked on many times and is undoubtedly a reason for its success.

With this issue Culture enters the era of electronic publication under new editorial arrangements. This gives an opportunity to look back to its origin and highlight subjects it has covered since the publication of volume 1, number 1 in 1979.

First invitations to contribute were sent in 1978 for publication the following year. These were to Dr. Martin Skirrow for a seminal piece on the role of *Campylobacter* in enteritis, and to Mr. Ken Phillips of Luton Public Health Laboratory whose work on selective culture media for anaerobic organisms helped establish the importance of non-sporing anaerobes in infections of humans.

Glancing through past issues has shown how Culture tracked advances in microbiology from 1978 until the present day. Reflecting its importance, there were papers on *Campylobacter* in 1981, 1988, 1996 and 2004. The second issue in September of 1979 included a paper by Dr. J.G. Davis reviewing improvements to microbiological control in the dairy industry. Subsequently there were other papers covering food hygiene and preservation including one describing the state of the science before 1950 and predicting how it might become in the 1980s; it is fascinating to read it now.

Following the recognition in the USA of *Legionella* as the cause of a new respiratory disease, a Culture article by J. Fallon in 1979 was followed by another from Dr. Julian Dennis in 1986 on isolation of the organism from the environment. Other papers published included those on *Listeria* and *Clostridium difficile*, after


OXOID culture

March 1979

Published as a service to microbiology by Oxoid Limited

Campylobacters and enteritis

M. B. Skirrow, M.B., Ch.B., Ph.D., M.R.C. Path., D.T.M. and H. Consultant Microbiologist, Department of Pathology (Microbiology), Worcester Royal Infirmary

The cover of the first issue of Culture in 1979 with a seminal piece on the role of *Campylobacter* in enteritis by Dr. Martin Skirrow.

the importance of these organisms as human pathogens became ever more apparent. Problems of antibiotic resistance, increasing knowledge of *E. coli* as an enteric pathogen and the association of tuberculosis with HIV infection, have also been featured. The epidemic of the cattle disease Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) led to a paper about the causative agent, prions, in 1990. An issue in 1981 detailing the early attempts to automate microbiology contrasts with the current situation in many laboratories today. Much more recently, in 2011, the importance and role of biofilms and cell signalling was reviewed by Alexander Rickard and his colleagues at the University of Michigan.

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Culture celebrated 25 and 30 years of publication with editions on key areas of food microbiology and infectious disease respectively.

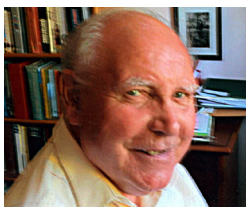
Eric Bridson contributed a series about pioneers of microbiology, providing valuable insights into the origins of the science and the foundations of where it is today. Some subjects covered, such as *Aeromonas* and *Yersinia* did not achieve as great importance as human pathogens as it was once thought they would.

Special anniversary issues were published in 1999, 2004 and 2009, to mark 21, 25 and 30 years respectively. Professor Grahame Gould was a guest editor for the 25th year anniversary edition, with the theme of food microbiology and Professor Ian Philips for the 30th year edition which covered aspects of antimicrobial therapy and resistance. Professor Grahame Gould subsequently joined the editorial board as a permanent member.

As it stands today, Dr. Peter Stephens, now Director of Culture Media and AST R&D, holds the title for the longest standing member of the editorial board, with select representatives from R&D and Marketing injecting a fresh approach to Culture moving forward.

This personal overview of the history of Culture shows how it has comprehensively covered many of the most important events in microbiology over the past thirty years, with the strong ethos of superb scientific content underpinning every issue. In its future guise, Culture will continue to hold this ethos and knowledge of its roots, ensuring an interesting read for all and most importantly, scientific excellence. I wish them all the very best.

The complete Culture back catalogue is available to browse at:
thermoscientific.com/culture-reviews



Acknowledgements

Author: David Post

David Post, former Oxoid Technical Support Manager, was a founding member of the Culture Editorial Board, continuing to serve as a board member until 2013.

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Contact Information:
microbiology@thermofisher.com
USA +1 800 255 6730
International +44 (0) 1256 841144

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