Agnès Fouet – departing Editor-in-Chief

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Agnès Fouet completes her 5 year term as the Editor-in-Chief (EiC) of Microbiology this year. She joined the journal in 1995 as an ‘MEB’ (‘Member of the Editorial Board’, now called ‘Editor’), serving an extended term before becoming an Editor (equivalent to ‘Senior Editor’ in the current nomenclature) in 2002. Agnès took up the role of EiC in 2010. The job is a demanding and multifaceted one, and Agnès has carried it out to the highest standards. Microbiology has the largest editorial board of the Society for General Microbiology’s journals, and its EiC has the sometimes onerous task of recruiting, in consultation with the Senior Editors, new Editors and overseeing their training. The Editor Training Loop is an important feature of the journal that helps to ensure that our authors receive a uniformly excellent service from the Editors handling their papers. In addition to recruitment and mentoring, Agnès has also had the vital task of promoting Editors to Senior Editor positions. Her unerring eye for editorial talent has ensured that the Microbiology team has consistently been one of outstandingly high quality. She has also endeavoured to ensure a gender balance and geographical spread of Editors and Senior Editors, and to increase Editor engagement in the journal by encouraging discussion and input from them.

The primary task of the EiC is to act as the ultimate gatekeeper of the science that Microbiology publishes and Agnès has been impressively diligent in performing this task. Her work has been carried out against a background of great change in scientific publishing and within the Society of General Microbiology. The Society relocated from Reading to central London in 2013 and the Publishing department experienced almost a complete turnover of staff. In such circumstances there is a risk that institutional memory can be lost. That this did not happen is a tribute to the office staff and the members of our editorial boards. Throughout her term of office, Agnès steered Microbiology safely through the period of uncertainty that accompanied these changes, and also through the onset of the open access era. She has also overseen the implementation of the ever-evolving publishing technologies used by the Society. The importance of managing these processes well cannot be overstated because the Society relies on the income from its journals to fund its charitable work and Microbiology is the leading generator of revenue within the Society’s journals stable. Agnès has been innovative in introducing new features to Microbiology, such as ‘Editor’s Choice’, new subject categories, a revision of the journal’s scope, and creation of a Board of Reviewers and of the forthcoming ‘Microbe Profiles’ feature.

All of these activities involve a great deal of hard work, and a very substantial commitment of time and energy. It is important to remember that, like all of her editorial board members, Agnès is an unpaid volunteer who must integrate her demanding work on behalf of Microbiology with her day job as an academic scientist. It is an honour for me to acknowledge all of the work and skill that Agnès has invested in Microbiology and to thank her sincerely on behalf of the Publishing Committee and the Society.