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Whether you are a virus or a learned Society-based virology journal, evolution is critical for success!

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In January 1967, the first volume of a new Journal, the *Journal of General Virology*, was launched. It contained 18 articles, 17 of which came from laboratories in the United Kingdom. The topics provide a good snapshot for the state of the art in virological research 50 years ago. The first human footsteps had not yet appeared on the Moon, but virologists were able to define the biophysical characteristics of viruses¹ and identify the effects of interferon on the synthesis of viral nucleic acid². These achievements may seem modest in the landscape of today's technologically advanced laboratories, but at the time they represented significant advances in our understanding of viral biology.

Cut to 2017 and look at the [latest table of contents](#): some of the titles might seem familiar to the virologists of a half century ago – for example, words like interferon still appear with great regularity! However, a deeper look demonstrates how the Journal has become scientifically much more diverse: many more viruses, techniques and topics appear in the titles. We are also more geographically inclusive and publish articles from across the globe [Fig 1.]. One thing has not changed though – the Journal continues to publish high quality, rigorously peer-reviewed science at the forefront of modern virology and continues to make a significant contribution to the field.

Figure 1

As part of the Society's 70th Anniversary celebrations in 2015, 15 seminal papers from the *Journal of General Virology* were selected for inclusion in the [Anniversary collection](#), a commentary³ on the selection of which can be found [here](#).

These are exciting times for the Journal – our recent move to continuous publication promises to reduce the time taken to get papers from acceptance to version of record (at present within 16 days). This year we started publishing [ICTV Virus Taxonomy Profiles](#) written by the International Committee for the Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV). These citable articles provide concise reviews of individual virus families (e.g. *Flaviviridae*⁴) and we hope will become the first port of call for researchers seeking up to date information on virus taxonomy and characteristics.

However, these are also challenging times for society-based publishing in particular and academic publishing in general. We are strong advocates for society journals (#SocietyJournalsMatter) and see the direct connection between publishing in the Journal and benefits to the microbiological community through such activities as [education and outreach](#), [grants](#) and [policy](#). As an example, resources accrued by non-profit societies support post-graduate student attendance at annual and

focussed meetings. Symposia at these meetings bring leaders from across the discipline to speak, interact and provoke the community to explore new areas. Challenges include ensuring that open access uptake increases, and that we adapt to the ever-changing publishing landscape. Specifically, we need to respond to the impact that both preprint servers and newer microbiological journals will have on established publications, by providing researchers a platform to publish their research quickly and allowing easy transfer to journals such as the *Journal of General Virology*.

When you publish in the Journal, your paper carries the full weight of our prestigious Microbiology Society members past and present; Noble Laureates such as Alexander Fleming and Paul Nurse, Royal Society Fellows, National Academy members and Industry Leaders. With this in mind, we are deeply grateful to all the authors who have published in the Journal, and we encourage you to continue to send your work to us. We extend thanks to our Editors, Editorial Board Members and other dedicated reviewers who ensure the scientific rigour of the publication process, and the office staff who strive to make it as smooth and efficient as possible.

Alongside the Society's new [5 year strategy](#), we are developing plans for the *Journal of General Virology* that will enable the journal to continue to attract and publish high quality research and provide a seamless service to authors. Just like the viruses we study, we will adapt, change and grow but we will never compromise on quality and robust review. Speed is important, but excellence is everything and, with your help, this will continue to be our mantra over the next 50 years.

Figure 1: *Journal of General Virology* authorship 2016 (by country of submitting author)

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Fig 1

