

EDITORIAL

Academies have published the findings of scientists and scholars over centuries. Anno 2001, the volume number of the *Proceedings of the Estonian Academy of Sciences* is 50. This number is small in historical context but still large in local time-scale.

Jakob Hurt, Estonian clergyman and folklore collector from the 19th century, saw the mission of small Estonia in enhancing the minds of its people. In the contemporary world science is undoubtedly one of the main challenges for mind wherever the scientists live or whatever their mother tongue is. But science belongs to all mankind, there are no national multiplication tables. This makes the challenge even more serious. The only way to keep the pace is to run as fast as possible. That is what scientists and scholars in Estonia as well as all over the world did even during the dark times of hostile powers. Looking now back at our dark times, we can see good results also from that period. Especially valuable are those from the fields where political pressure was hardest. Yes, the toll that had to be paid is also felt in the *Proceedings* of that time. Nevertheless, the positive side has much more weight. Today the *Proceedings* is certainly not the same it was 50 years ago when started in two series. For a certain period, the list included six series altogether. Now the *Proceedings* has five series. In addition, the long-standing series on Humanities and Social Sciences has, together with *Acta et Commentationes Universitatis Tartuensis*, been replaced with a new journal *Trames* and journals on history and archaeology. Most of the series are now published jointly with universities – a logical step for a small country.

There is only one way to estimate the value of scientific and scholarly papers before their publication – peer-reviewing. It is especially important for scientific periodicals of a small country and was accepted years ago also by the *Proceedings*. Another facet of periodicals is their openness – all the authors should be treated equally. As a direct consequence, the series of the *Proceedings* have international advisory boards, the papers are peer-reviewed, the language is the lingua franca of the contemporary scientific world – English. Is that enough to compete within the thick wood of publications where the tops are widely seen and recognized? My strong feeling is that there are many reasons for being proud of the past 50 years as well as for looking optimistically into the future.

Estonia is a small country. Its 1.4 million inhabitants would roughly suffice for a good-sized city, not to speak about metropolises. Nevertheless, it is a state

meeting occidental standards, with its written language from the first half of the 16th century. The *Proceedings* has reflected the development of scientific ideas in Estonia and now represents a forum for scientists on a much larger scale. The world of science is actually a network. The knots are faculties, labs, libraries ..., knitted into a whole by threads including journals. The thicker the network, the more ideas it carries. This is why the *Proceedings* is a thread in the international network, recognized by many reference bases and libraries.

Starting now the next half-century for the *Proceedings*, we cannot forget that we are all facing a new century and a new millennium. This is also a challenge for science. The predictions indicate the growing role of nano-, bio-, and infotechnologies all over the world. In this haste we sometimes forget to ask how we ourselves fit in with this progress. This is sometimes more important than just a new computer. Concurrence is even a more important driving force for mankind than the technologies. I am sure that the *Proceedings of the Estonian Academy of Sciences* will continue to strive for new scientific and scholarly results, that is, for excellency.

Let me finish by thanking all those who have worked and are working now for the *Proceedings* and the peers thanks to whom the journal maintains the standards of the world of science. Welcome to all the old and new authors!

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