

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Summer 2026 Editor-In-Chief Message

Joel B. Dacks^{1,2,3} 

¹Division of Infectious Diseases, Department of Medicine, and Department of Biological Sciences, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada | ²Institute of Parasitology, Biology Centre, Czech Academy of Sciences, České Budějovice, Czech Republic | ³Centre for Life's Origins and Evolution, Department of Genetics, Evolution, & Environment, University College, London, UK

Correspondence: Joel B. Dacks (dacks@ualberta.ca)

Received: 14 September 2026 | **Revised:** 14 September 2026 | **Accepted:** 16 September 2026

Dear Readers,

As summer turns into fall and our attention turns to the new academic year, it is my pleasure to write my annual Summer Message and highlight some of the changes and achievements of 2026.

This year saw the departure of two of our longest-serving Associate Editors, Richard Snyder and Douglas Chalker, to whom we are extremely grateful. We also welcomed Feng Gao, Fabien Burki, and Eunsoo Kim to the editorial board. All bring deep expertise in phylogenomics and protist diversity, as well as in ciliate taxonomy, microbial ecology, and flagellate taxonomy, respectively.

It was a pleasure to meet many of you in person at the Protistology Open meeting in Prague in April, where the ISOP joined with Protistology Nordics, the Society of Eukaryotic Microbiology, the Italian Society of Protistology, and the Czech Society for Parasitology to host a joint conference at the Grand Hotel International. Notably, this was the site of the first International Congress of Protozoology, held 65 years ago. That meeting was an intentional bridging across political and global divides during the Cold War, and it was quite meaningful to be gathering together as multiple scientific societies with this in the forefront of our minds. It was a tremendous meeting, with a mentorship workshop to kick off the event, a brilliant display of protistology talks and posters across five days, and opportunities to visit with friends and colleagues, old and new. The event was capped off by the presentation of the inaugural ISOP Lifetime Achievement Award to Miklos Muller for his pioneering work on anaerobic protists, including the discovery of the hydrogenosome.

In this spirit of collaboration and fellowship, The Journal of Eukaryotic Microbiology, Protist, and the European Journal

of Protistology have joined forces and, for the first time, are co-publishing a cross-journal joint special issue. Authors are welcome to submit primary work or review articles that they presented at the meeting, or work stemming from a collaboration that was forged at the conference. Each manuscript can be submitted to any of the three journals according to the authors' preferences and, to make this as accessible as possible, wherever they have the best arrangement for open access. While each journal will maintain a special issue page off their website, a central Table of Contents will be hosted on the ISOP website (protistologists.org) which will link out to each article across the three platforms. I am so excited to work with my colleagues at Protist and EJP on this venture!

At the Protistology Open meeting, the JEM Editorial Board also held its first meeting during my tenure as EIC. We made fairly substantial changes to some operational policies, which are worth sharing with you. The first is the introduction of a new selection procedure for the William Trager Award. This prize is given to the "outstanding paper in the Journal of Eukaryotic Microbiology" in a calendar year. The newly implemented process integrates leading and lagging quantitative metrics, such as full-text views per month and citations, with a multi-step subjective assessment for short-listing of finalists, and finally, voting by the entire editorial board. Though more time-consuming than simple metrics, we feel that this process will better allow us to celebrate the papers that provide rich stories, deep approaches to questions, and meaningful advances in the field of protistology. This change coincides with the introduction of a new, beautifully drawn certificate by long-time ISOP member David Montagnes. This award certificate (Figure 1), one of a new series commissioned by ISOP, shows stages of Plasmodium and red blood cells, reflecting William Trager's dedication towards understanding this devastating parasite. The award honors his

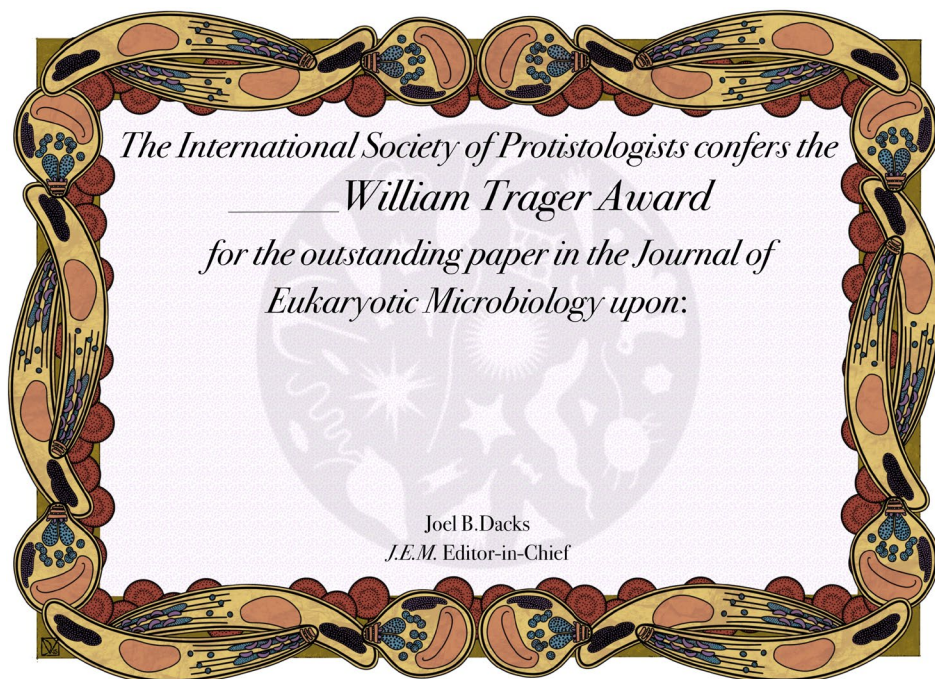


FIGURE 1 | Trager Award certificate drawn by David Montagnes.

contribution to protistology, ISOP, and its journal (see <https://protistologists.org/programs/awards/trager-award/william-trager/>). Because the past criteria required a two-year lag time, we now get to announce two years' worth of winners. Though addressing vastly different topics and using almost completely different methods, both papers impressed the Editorial Board with the depth in which questions were examined and the thoughtful insight that was brought to the interpretation of the data. Congratulations to both teams!

- The William Trager Award for 2024 is conferred upon Anders Alfjorden, Arni Kristmundsson, Ioana Onut-Brännström, Niklas Wengström, Mahwash Jamy, B. David Persson, and Fabien Burki for their paper, "Identification of a new gregarine parasite associated with mass mortality events of freshwater pearl mussels (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) in Sweden." *J Eukaryot Microbiol.* 2024 May-Jun;71(3):e13021.
- The William Trager Award for 2025 is conferred upon Chuanqi Jiang, Jing Zhang, Guangying Wang, Yuan Wang, Che Hu, Weiwei Qin, Tingting Pan, Siyu Gu, Xueyan Wang, Kai Chen, Xiaocui Chai, Mingkun Yang, Fang Zhou, Alan Warren, Jie Xiong, and Wei Miao for their manuscript "Decoding the Nature of the Peritrich Stalk: A Distinctive Organelle in a Large Group of Ciliated Unicellular Eukaryotes." *J Eukaryot Microbiol.* 2025 Mar-Apr;72(2):e70006.

The second operational point discussed by the Editorial Board was ways to improve the speed of review at JEM, while not sacrificing the quality of the review process. Through our conversations, it became clear that the biggest challenge is simply finding expert people willing to take on the review assignment. Life in academia is so busy and not likely to slow down. And so, starting in the fall of 2026, we will be reviving and revamping our Board of Reviewers. This Board will comprise protistology researchers

with a wide range of expertise, by invitation. We believe and hope that membership on the board will be seen as a mark of distinction. Board Members will be prioritized by Wiley's peer-review portal, Research Exchange, for review requests, and by agreeing to the membership, board members indicate their willingness to review for JEM when time allows. The initial round of invitations will be to senior- and mid-career researchers. As always, we recognize the value of peer-review shadowing as a learning and teaching opportunity. Working cooperatively to keep with transparency and confidentiality guidelines, JEM encourages reviewers to involve trainees in the peer-review process. Moreover, the Editorial Board discussed ways to get early-career researchers more involved in the journal and the peer-review process. Therefore, we are going to open a selection process early in 2027 whereby ECRs (assistant professor and research fellows) can apply to join the Board. There, they will get mentorship in peer reviewing and the recognition for their service. So please stay tuned for the opening of that procedure.

Finally, and I think most excitingly, we decided that JEM needed to update the benefit that ISOP members receive for their involvement in the Society. Whereas until now ISOP members got 6 free pages in JEM per year (non-OA), from July 1, 2026, this page limitation has been lifted! We hope that this removes barriers for you when considering JEM as a place for you to send your work, and we are excited to hear your stories.

You have generously sent important and impactful work to us over the past year, and it has shown in this year's 2025/2026 Impact Factor of 3.3! This is a 123% increase from last year and a full impact factor point from 2 years ago, bringing JEM on par with journals in cell biology, microbiology, and molecular evolution. Throughout the process of selecting our short list of papers for the Trager Award, I was reminded and impressed all over again by the work that you have published with us. I can't wait to see what you discover this coming year.