January 2007 starts BioProcess International’s fifth year of publication. As I write this in mid-December, I look out at trees on which only a few brown leaves still cling tenaciously to spindly branches. And given that we editors work in the Pacific Northwest, it is raining (again). The outward-angled windows of our office building (an “upside-down” black-glass pyramid, referred to by some as the “Darth Vader building”) show gray skies and holiday shoppers braving the wind as they dart through the mall parking lot. Every now and then we see a hint of sun (local weather reporters refer to “sun breaks”), but we ignore it so as not to scare it away.

Five years. The four of us (Brian Caine, Stephanie Shaffer, Cheryl Scott, and I) started creating this magazine in May 2002, and our first issue appeared in January 2003. Our initial, highly modest goals (i.e., world domination) of course gave way to more realistic start-up plans. We sought to make the most of our combined experience (something around 50 years, we figured) to create a magazine that would grow and evolve as necessary with the industry. We knew that industrial biotechnology is far from static, and our editorial perspectives needed always to reflect that — even to take us out on a limb now and then to test the strength of new growth (something about the gravity of the situation). We wanted to convey the state-of-the-art (or arts, to be accurate) as well as point to future trends. Advisors told us that a great service would be to help “drive” those trends, and as much as we could through manuscripts from readers and those we have solicited from conference presentations, we have aimed to do that.

While musing on our staff’s combined years in the industry, I realized the other day that I myself am heading into my 18th year of editing and acquiring manuscripts related to biopharmaceutical development. As an editor (journalist, science fiction geek, a.k.a. washed-up English teacher), I however take credit only for choosing excellent industry advisors, those on my various editorial advisory boards as well as in the industry at large. They are the folks I look forward to visiting with at conferences, some of whose careers in the industry are themselves a history lesson of biotech successes, failures, and resurrections; of companies that no longer exist and of others that serve as tributes to innovative business models that sustained them through hard times. I have found myself wondering just how much biopharmaceutical literature I’ve acquired, read, and edited over the past 17 years — and marveling at what I and my staff(s) have helped contribute to that repository of knowledge. It has been a wonderful career choice for us generalists, assembling and trying to balance information from the interdisciplinary array of fields that make up this industry.

My conclusion? Surely I should be so much smarter than I am by now. Alas.

A FEW PLANS FOR 2007

Here are some of the things we’re working on for 2007 and beyond and some of the ways that you might want to help us.

The Best of BPI: Senior technical editor Cheryl Scott invites your feedback on the best or your favorite BPI articles over the past four years — in preparation for our fifth anniversary supplement in the fall. Also, if you have any profound thoughts about what may be the most significant industry or technology advances in the past four–five years, she would like to hear your thoughts.

BIO: BioProcess International has been chosen to publish the special preshow issue for the 2007 BIO convention in Boston. Please plan to visit our Bioprocess Pavilion there, at which (among other things) invited speakers will give state-of-the-art presentations about their work. More details will follow!

Our regular issues will continue to alternate three main themes: production, processing, and manufacturing and compliance. Right now, as you make your own New Year’s resolutions, why not plan to write for us in 2007? Do you have a recent conference presentation that would be of benefit to your fellow readers across the globe? A half-finished manuscript lying in a desk drawer, nagging you to complete it? Are you working in a new technical area that you feel offers great promise for accelerating drug development and leading to innovative therapeutic applications? Do you have questions to pose to your fellow readers in our monthly “Reader Roundtable” email newsletter?

What has not been covered in the pages of BPI that you feel should be? What topics (speaking of going out on a limb) are now ripe for the picking? What old technologies might be dusted off for new applications, and what combinations of technologies and products might be offering new promise for innovative therapies?

For our part, we promise to continue to further the work of the biotechnology industry, even if it means taking a few editorial chances and making a few mistakes now and then. We have a small editorial–design staff (three people!), so we very much depend on all of you to help keep us current and alert to new opportunities. May the coming year bring us all a renewed sense of commitment to the values we hold dear, and may it bring to us all an international spirit of peace, tolerance, and goodwill.

S. Anne Montgomery
Editor in Chief