Introducing the Model Systems Series

Scan the contents of *Learning & Memory*, and you will find researchers working on a veritable Noah's Ark of nervous systems. Some contributors study the marine mollusk *Aplysia californica*; others study the rat hippocampus; still others, primate cognition, and so on. To celebrate these animal models, as well as to provide critical evaluations of their use in neuroscience research, *Learning & Memory* is proud to introduce the **Model Systems Series**, a section devoted to reviewing important model systems in the field of learning and memory.

The importance of discussing these model systems cannot be overstated. In the field of learning and memory, all experimental work builds heavily on the body of knowledge surrounding each characterized system. It would be unwise to design new experiments or interpret any resulting data without understanding one's chosen system as much as possible. Furthermore, a molecular biologist who works in a particular system would do well to know the issues facing the systems neuroscientist, and vice versa. Only then can we properly integrate data from systems, cellular, and molecular research, which all agree is the critical step for truly understanding how animals learn and remember.

So why think about systems in which you never intend to work? For one thing, cross-species comparisons are especially fruitful in the field of learning and memory. The differences and similarities that we observe in various learning systems, from slug conditioning to human declarative memory, contribute immensely to our understanding of basic principles. Furthermore, different systems permit different experimental approaches—a human can be interviewed, but an invertebrate network can be recorded at every neuron. The disparate insights coming from these approaches make it useful to look to other model systems for principles and ideas you can adapt and test in your own laboratory.

The **Model Systems Series** will comprise invited, peer-reviewed articles on each model system, including basic descriptions, analysis of significant contributions, and discussion of future promise. The series will range from the venerable (e.g., *Aplysia* conditioning) to the up-and-coming (e.g., *C. elegans*), and include broad reviews of lesser-known models as well as more focused reviews on heavily-studied systems. We also welcome proposals for new articles in this series. And so, with the publication of "A Systems Approach to the Cellular Analysis of Associative Learning in the Pond Snail *Lymnaea*" by Paul Benjamin and colleagues in this issue and "God's Organism? The Chick as a Model System for Memory Studies" by Steven P.R. Rose in January 2000, *Learning & Memory* is pleased to inaugurate the Series as our newest service to the wider neuroscience community.

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