More than 8,000 scientific journals are published each year, some more important and prestigious than others as determined by a metric of worth called the impact factor. The impact factor rankings are released annually by the news and business intelligence company, Thomson Reuters. In the latest report, ranked within the top 1.2 percent are two journals published right here at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory by the CSHL Press — Genome Research and Genes & Development (see sidebar). The report’s sublists hold more honors for Genome Research: it ranks second among journals in the “Genetics and Heredity” and “Biotechnology and Applied Microbiology” categories.

“We’re proud that Genome Research has become so highly valued by the genomics community,” beams Hillary Sussman, who became executive editor of the journal in 1995, calling it “Genome Research. 16 years later, Inglis and Sussman are gratified to see GR make the predicted move — from pure methodology to developing new applications for genomics. The scientific editorial board, which remains vital to the journal’s success, still includes Eric Green, Rick Myers, and Richard Gibbs from the PCR era, but has expanded to include Aravinda Chakravarti, Bill Paré, and Evan Eichler. The journal’s scope is ever widening. It includes emerging and cross-disciplinary topics such as molecular evolution and neurogenomics in addition to staples such as systems biology and genome structure and function.

“GR is also more selective than ever,” says Sussman, “with around 15% of all submitted manuscripts being accepted for publication.” The rigorous peer review — the thorough vetting process in which a panel of experts debates the merits of each manuscript and the legitimacy of its science — has ensured that only cutting-edge and top-notch papers appear in each issue. “In a field as diverse and fast-moving as genomics it can be challenging to differentiate the solid science from flashy, technically weak publications,” says Daniel MacArthur, a genomics expert at Harvard/MGH who also writes a popular blog for Wired magazine. “But if I see something pop up in GR’s table of contents, I know it’s worth paying close attention to it.”

If a strong impact factor is one indication of GR’s importance, the frequent coverage of its papers in the mainstream media is another. One recent paper was even featured as one of the top 10 medical breakthroughs of 2011 by TIME magazine.

The announcement of the completion of the first draft of the human genome at CSHL’s Grace Auditorium more than a decade ago included a promise about the enormous benefits that these results would one day offer to mankind. “We are driven by the goal of helping to deliver this goal and making GR the journal that shows genomics matters to human health,” says Inglis.