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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

As anyone who follows American finance knows, the banking industry is among the most heavily regulated of its kind in the nation. This regulation is born out of the uneasy partnership of necessity and experience, as each successive wave of scandal and exposure leads to new and more complex laws that dictate the seemingly simple matter of how a bank holds and uses money. The fact that it takes a host of lawyers and regulators to constantly update and interpret these laws only underscores how fluid and adaptable these regulations must be to remain relevant in our highly complex financial world.

The difficulties inherent in banking currency pale next to the challenges of biobanking. Biobanks, as described by author Larry Palmer, are "repositories of tissues, cell lines, blood samples, and other biological specimens that are crucial to genomics, proteomics, and other emerging forms of biomedical research." In short, biobanks are the storage place of the building-blocks of human life. Whether they are privately or publicly owned, and regardless of what mission guides each particular biobank, it is clear that the material they hold and preserve is far more important than simple currency. And yet, as guest editors Mark A. Rothstein and Bartha Maria Knoppers and their team of exemplary contributors suggest, the importance and deep complexity of biobanks are not reflected in current regulations. The editors and their authors, in this issue's symposium *Regulation of Biobanks*, address questions of how biobanks should be run, how donors should participate, what role the public and the common good plays in biobanks, and how to proceed when wrongdoing occurs. The symposium as a whole argues that if biobanks are to play the crucial role in the 21st century that we all expect, there must be a regulatory framework in place that will encourage innovation and growth while protecting the rights of donors and the general public, with an eye firmly fixed towards the greater good.

I also encourage you to read Boston University professor Tracey Maclin's article on DNA searches. Maclin's article is the first in a series of DNA articles that will be published in the *Journal* as part of the larger DNA Fingerprinting and Civil Liberties Project, funded by the National Institute of Health, under grant no. 1R01 HG0028 36-01, and sponsored by the American Society of Law, Medicine & Ethics. During the coming year we will be periodically publishing more articles on this important topic.

Ted Hutchinson
Editor