

International Edition: DOI: 10.1002/anie.201511089
German Edition: DOI: 10.1002/ange.201511089

Black Sheep, Points of Light, and *Angewandte Chemie*

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Yesterday I rejected a Communication directly, without refereeing, that, with a slightly different title, but otherwise identical content, had been submitted four months ago, and directly rejected at that time; the corresponding author did not mention the previous submission at all, and also answered the standard question, if there has been a previous version of this manuscript, with “no”. Recently we rejected a Minireview whole paragraphs of which were copied word-for-word from the original publications of other authors; the author then actually asked if we would consider a revised version. Not so long ago, a renowned professor asked if he could write a Highlight on a recently published article, that article was by one of his own former PhD students. Another Highlight, submitted without prior consultation (and directly rejected), was from an author who was the lab neighbor of the scientist whose work he wished to highlight, and all the proposed referees had a personal relationship to the author. And last week an author complained about a rejection which had been made for several reasons, including that a similar article, with some of the same authors, had been published in another journal, four weeks before the submission, and this published article was neither cited in the submission nor mentioned in the cover letter. These cases had their origins in America, Asia, and Europe, thus there is no nation- or culture-specific behavior at their root.

Why do I mention these isolated incidents? Firstly, to say they are isolated incidents. In the course of a year maybe 100 such cases come to our attention and although this is far too many, the number is relatively small. In this year alone (2015) we received approximately 11 200 Communications (ca. 5 % more than in 2014) and over 30 000 referee reports; and we are in contact with many authors concerning other types of articles (Reviews, etc.). It is thus a small number of black sheep who—knowingly, or sometimes unknowingly—ignore the established rules of publishing. The range of unacceptable practices runs from deception to plagiarism. Herein, I will leave out the most serious deception—the falsification of results—and the most common—the more or less deliberate ignoring, or misleading citation, of important earlier results.

Secondly, I mention these cases to show that the vast majority of scientists behave impeccably, however, the damage done by a few affects us all. Scientists today come more and more under general suspicion. Whereas in normal society, concrete grounds for suspicion must exist before an investigation can begin, in science, every author is almost automatically investigated for breaches of practice: Many journals, including *Angewandte Chemie*, use plagiarism detection software. What troubles me is the general suspicion of scientists that is spreading through the offices of journals and funding organizations. Publishing houses now offer courses on publishing ethics—should that not be part of a University education? Nearly all the themes at the heart of publishing ethics concern common sense and fairness; things that someone embarking on a scientific career should have grasped early on, and

seen demonstrated by their peers and role models at every stage of their education.

From the black sheep to points of light: First on the list are the great many good referees who advise the editors and help the authors to improve their manuscripts (the not so good referees and few black sheep among them require a separate Editorial). Since 2009, we send all referees who provide 12 or more reports per year for *Angewandte Chemie* a certificate (on request we will also confirm the refereeing duties if required). In 2014, 200 scientists sent 12 or more reports. To thank this group of referees we offered each of them the chance to make their next article in *Angewandte Chemie*, or any of its sister journals, Open Access free of charge.

The number of publications continues to grow relentlessly. In chemistry alone around 200 000 articles per year are published; every article should be refereed, every journal claims to have a peer review process. To paraphrase a quote from Robert Musil, in “The Man without Qualities” he wrote, all people are equally unhappy, just on different levels; similarly all scientific articles are refereed, just on different levels. Some articles are refereed six, eight, or ten times François Diederich asked in an earlier Editorial “Are We Refereeing Ourselves to Death?” To help stem this tide, today journals often try to offer publication of the manuscript in a suitable sister journal, without further refereeing (or further refereeing by the same referees). Manuscripts that only just fall short of the very high standards of novelty and importance required by *Angewandte Chemie* (and with a rejection rate of 80%, that is many) can,

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when their content is of general interest, be published in *Chemistry—A European Journal* or *Chemistry—An Asian Journal*; or in other cases in journals that target a particular community, for example, to mention just one, the youngest and already very successful sister journal *ChemElectroChem*. There are also a great many studies which provide solid but incremental advances, or support what is already known. The value of such results should not be underestimated. To give this work a forum ChemPubSoc Europe, the consortium of 16 chemical societies, has, along with Wiley-VCH, now launched *ChemistrySelect* (www.chemistryselect.org; Figure 1).

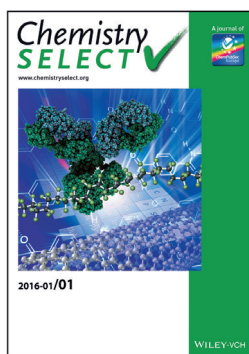


Figure 1. The cover picture of *ChemistrySelect*, the recently launched sister journal of *Angewandte Chemie*. More information can be found on the *ChemistrySelect* Homepage.

On the subject of many publications and many authors (and referees), often a name alone is not sufficient to uniquely identify a scientist. For this reason it is possible for scientists to acquire an individual identification number, the ORCID number (ORCID stands for Open Researcher and Contributor ID). We encourage our authors and referees to register next time they submit a manuscript—many already have.

Other important points of light for a journal are the Editorial Board and International Advisory Board. Coming to the end of their terms on the Editorial Board in 2015 are H.-J. Böhm (Roche), T. Geelhaar (Merck), and A. Kreimeyer (BASF), and they will be replaced in 2016 by M. Brudermüller (BASF), K. Griesar (Merck), and C. Kohlpaintner (Clariant). Leaving the International Advisory Board are C. Bertozzi (USA), K. Kim (Republic of Korea),



Figure 2. Cover pictures of the Special Issues in 2015: 150 Years of BASF; The International Year of Light; 50 Years of Official German–Israeli Relationships.

and L.-J. Wan (China), and for them come J. Cho (Republic of Korea), P. G. Schultz (USA), and Y. Xie (China); more about the new members can be found in the “News” Section. On behalf of the Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker (GDCh), the publishers Wiley-VCH, and the editors I thank those leaving the boards for their commitment and the new members for their willingness to support *Angewandte Chemie*.

The role of the Editorial Board and the International Advisory Board is particularly important in the planning of Special Issues, and in 2015 there were three of these (Figure 2): Issue 11 was dedicated to the 150th Anniversary of BASF, Issue 39 to the International Year of Light, and Issue 42 primarily contained articles from scientists from Germany and Israel, to commemorate the 50 years of official relationships between the two countries. BASF celebrated its anniversary with scientific symposia in Ludwigshafen in March, in Chicago in June, and in Shanghai in November, covering the themes of energy, food, and urban living—for all three topics chemistry plays a decisive role. Issue 11 of *Angewandte Chemie* contained many articles that also formed the basis of lectures at the symposia. In particular, an Essay on the future of chemistry by George Whitesides (a member of our International Advisory Board) received a lot of attention.

For many, light is a purely physical phenomenon, for chemists it is the be all and end all, as a reaction accelerator, an energy source that many chemists are being inspired to make more useable, and naturally, as the medium for spectroscopists, to name a few. Naturally, the

spectrum of illuminating articles in Issue 39 was correspondingly broad. Finally, the German–Israeli Issue (Issue 42), honors the special relationship between these two countries. It also draws attention to a symposium that the Israeli Chemical Society (ICS) and the GDCh are organizing at the annual meeting of the ICS early in 2017. For many years Israeli chemists have published in *Angewandte Chemie*, which in light of the forced emigration and murder of Jewish scientists between 1933 and 1945 is something that cannot be taken for granted. Israel is represented on the International Advisory Board by Ilan Marek and Itamar Willner, and in 2015 around 100 articles were submitted to *Angewandte Chemie* from that country. We are honored to receive this trust.

While I am writing this, many politicians are meeting in Paris for the UN Climate Conference to discuss how the climate change can be stopped. Even though most attention will be paid to the sociopolitical changes, scientific advances will also help, and chemistry must play a significant role. You can be sure that *Angewandte Chemie* will bring you many interesting results on this and numerous other fascinating topics throughout the coming year.

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PS: You can now read *Angewandte Chemie* on the move, not only on your iPhone and iPad, but also on Android-based Smartphones and Tablet Computers. Follow the links to the “Mobile Edition” on our Homepage.