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Editorial

Chemistry of Materials in 2002

The beginning of the new year provides an opportunity to reflect on scientific trends that have emerged during the past 12 months and, for our editorial staff, to evaluate how well *Chemistry of Materials* is promoting materials research and informing its audience of the most exciting advances. Authors, reviewers, and readers will notice several changes to the Journal that occurred during the past year. The terms of service have come to a close for a number of our Editorial Advisory Board members. We sincerely thank all of them for their dedicated service on the board over the years. At the same time, we would like to welcome 9 new colleagues who have agreed to serve on the advisory board for the next 3 years, and we are looking forward to working with them. These individuals play a vital role in providing a broad base of perspectives that is so necessary for a multidisciplinary journal. With these advisors, the editors continue to strive for improvements in the quality of the Journal.

The emergence during the past year of numerous nanoscience and technology initiatives, among others, with a substantial materials component illustrates that fundamental research at the interface of chemistry, chemical engineering, and materials science, particularly at the molecular- and nanoscale, has a bright future. We at *Chemistry of Materials* feel quite fortunate to be involved with a journal that is uniquely situated at the nexus of these disciplines. Indeed, during the past year, the Journal, primarily through the efforts of Associate Editor Helmut Eckert, published a "Special Issue on Organic-Inorganic Nanocomposite Materials". This issue, a compendium of 35 short reviews by leaders in this multifaceted field and 34 original contributions describing the latest breakthroughs, spotlighted a diverse array of topics ranging from self-assembly at the

nanoscale to inorganic-molecular hybrids and bioinspired materials. Though the issue is but a snapshot of this growing field, we are confident that it will serve as a benchmark for future work and will become part of every material scientist's permanent collection. Many thanks are due to the *Chemistry of Materials* and American Chemical Society staff that helped organize the issue, the authors who provided first-class manuscripts, and the reviewers who so generously contributed their valuable time.

The Journal experienced some significant changes and advances in the past year. One of our associate editors, Elsa Reichmanis, was elected to the office of 2002 President-Elect of the ACS! We wish Elsa the best in her new role and we look forward to the creativity and leadership that she will bring to this position. Another distinction came with the release of the "impact factor" and "total citation" numbers for 2000, two of the standards that are commonly used to judge the influence of a journal. Both numbers (3.59 and 12,464, respectively) showed a substantial increase relative to previous years and resulted in a ranking of 3rd in impact factor and in total citations among all materials science primary journals. Considering that both factors must be used in evaluating the influence of a journal and the fact that no other journal appeared above *Chemistry of Materials* in both rankings, it can be argued that our journal is the most highly regarded one in materials science. The number of published manuscripts authored by non-U.S. contributors was near 70% of the total, revealing the expanding international appeal of the Journal. The growing popularity of the Journal is further revealed by the increased number of manuscripts submitted in 2001, continuing the upward trend observed in previous years. Given our commit-

ment to sustaining quality and leadership, managing production costs, and making the journal digestible, we strive to limit the annual number of total pages. When combined with an increase in the number of submissions, this has resulted in an overall rejection rate that now exceeds 50%. Overall page limits have also required that we strictly enforce the 1500 word limit for Communications. We ask our authors to limit Reviews to 10 journal pages (50 double-spaced manuscript pages) and full Articles to 6 journal pages (<30 double-spaced manuscript pages); a justification should be provided if Review papers and Articles exceed these limits.

We continue to apply exceptionally high standards to Communications, which must meet criteria of novelty and urgency to justify accelerated publication. Of course, articles are also expected to be highly original as well as comprehensive. Our reviewers play a key role in making these judgements, and we are sincerely grateful for the extraordinary service they provide. In recognition of the escalating burden of reviewing and of the physical limits of our reviewers, the Journal continually strives to broaden its reviewer base. Moreover, the editors are increasingly screening submissions for quality and appropriateness, sometimes intercepting articles unsuitable for the Journal and returning them to authors without review. Though the number of these is small, we believe that it not only reduces the load on our reviewers but also helps the authors by allowing them to seek other venues for their work in a more timely manner. We would like to remind authors that diligence in preparing a manuscript—conforming to the guidelines in the Notice to Authors, checking for clarity and completeness, use of good English, a clear statement of objectives, the results, and conclusions—is the best route for timely, helpful, and positive reviews.

Reviewers may recall that last year we began providing e-mail review templates for their convenience. These have become very popular with our reviewers and have improved our time to publication substantially. Reviewers and authors have probably noticed by this time that *Chemistry of Materials*, like other ACS journals, is moving toward Web-based submission and review of manuscripts. Though we expect this to improve the time to publication, this still depends on quality submissions from authors. Equally important, however, is the change in culture required of our reviewers who are accustomed to receiving manuscripts for review by paper mail. On the basis of my own performance, I realize that once having received an e-mail prompt directing me to a Web

site to download a manuscript for review, I have found it all too easy to put off going to the Web site immediately. Inevitably, this results in my forgetting my assignment, until I receive that “gentle” reminder (you all know what I mean) from the editorial office requesting the review. Thus, there is reason for concern that a Web-based review system can lead to less timely reviews, particularly among those of us entrenched in the old ways. As I receive more requests for Web-based reviews, however, I have trained myself to download the manuscripts immediately or review the manuscript immediately on the screen. Currently, *Chemistry of Materials* is processing only Communications through its Web site (authors can find the link to the submission page on the Journal Web site <http://pubs.acs.org/journals/cmater/index.html>), which should ease the editors and reviewers into the process. Nevertheless, we ask that authors and reviewers indulge us through the next year, as the Web site, including the current version, is a work-in-progress. Eventually, possibly near the end of 2002, we anticipate Web-based submission for all articles. The *Chemistry of Materials* editors are contributing to the design of the site to make manuscript submission and review more user-friendly than the current version, with authors being supplied with an on-line checklist to ensure that the manuscript is complete and properly formatted. We encourage our authors and reviewers to forward any advice in this regard to the main editorial office.

What's in store for next year? In addition to the refinement of our Web-based submission process, we also will begin efforts toward another special issue and are currently narrowing our list of possible topics. We will be seeking authors interested in writing topical reviews, and we would like to encourage more submissions in the areas of molecular and biomaterials as well as materials-related interface science. We also welcome recommendations from authors for cover art (preferably in color) pertaining to their manuscript, once accepted. Furthermore, we would like to ask that our reviewers inform the handling editor of papers they believe are deserving of special mention in other forums, such as *Chemical & Engineering News*. As always, we rely on and welcome the advice, comments, and constructive criticism of the entire materials community on any of these issues. Finally, the editors and staff of *Chemistry of Materials* wish you a successful and prosperous 2002.

Michael D. Ward
Associate Editor