

CHEMISTRY OF MATERIALS

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Editorial

What's New in 2003

A number of changes have been made in the format, organization, and manuscript submission process for *Chemistry of Materials* for 2003. These include an increase from 12 to 26 issues per year, the inclusion of graphical summaries for all manuscript types in the Table of Contents, a new cover design, and a modification in our scope statement and instructions to reviewers that places the publication of "forefront research" as our primary objective. The reasons for these changes are discussed below.

Growth of the Journal

Our change from a 12- to a 26-issue-per-year journal for 2003 reflects the enormous growth in submitted papers that we have experienced during the past 3 years (15–25% per year). This has been accompanied by a corresponding increase in our rejection rate, which was 55% in 2002. Despite this higher rejection rate and our insistence that accepted papers meet the criterion of utmost conciseness consistent with clarity and completeness, we found that the size of our monthly issues had reached the point where binding had become problematic. The growth that we have experienced is undoubtedly a consequence of several factors, not the least of which is the increasing popularity of materials chemistry as a research topic worldwide.

In response to this increase in submissions, *Chemistry of Materials* added a new associate editor and editorial office. In June of 2002, Prof. William Buhro of Washington University joined the journal as our seventh editor. His addition has helped us manage the increased influx of papers and plan for our upcoming transition to an all-electronic submission system. Along with most of the other ACS journals, we expect to be able to offer the option of electronic submission on the World Wide Web for all manuscript types (Short Reviews, Communications, and Articles) in the early part of 2003. Currently, we are designing the author and reviewer

interfaces to make these as user-friendly and effective as possible. We will also, however, continue to accept paper submissions for the foreseeable future.

A Key Criterion for Publication in This Journal

The goal of *Chemistry of Materials* has always been to publish the results of leading-edge research from all over the world in the burgeoning area of materials chemistry. The latest *Chemistry of Materials* "impact factor", as well as the various other criteria that are used to measure the "impact" of a journal, show that we are succeeding in this effort. In January of 2002, the Thompson ISI Essential Science Indicators ranked *Chemistry of Materials* as the number one journal in materials science on the basis of citations and citations per paper over the past 10+ years. Despite this increase in impact, the volume of papers being processed and published by this journal is a matter of concern to some of our readers and reviewers. Insofar as our readers are concerned, many would prefer to see fewer, higher quality, clearly leading-edge-type papers. Since this is consistent with the overall objective of our journal, we have decided to confront this problem by making it clearer to our authors and reviewers exactly what we are looking for in papers to be published. Starting in 2003, we will be emphasizing more strongly the criterion of "forefront research" as a requirement for publication in this journal. In addition to high-quality research and writing, originality, completeness, etc., we will be looking for evidence of a significant advancement in the state of understanding, or development, of the particular area of materials chemistry concerned. To assist our reviewers and our editors in determining which papers meet this criterion, *we will be asking the authors to describe in the paper, and/or in the cover letter accompanying the submitted paper, how their findings constitute a significant advance in the particular area of materials chemistry involved.* In general, papers that

are judged by the reviewers and/or the editors to be of high quality but of a more routine or incremental nature will be referred elsewhere for publication. Furthermore, papers that are found to be in need of major revision, especially when additional data is required, will generally be rejected rather than reconsidered for publication after revision. These changes have been incorporated into the latest version of our "Scope and Editorial Policy" document, which is included with this issue and is available on-line at <http://pubs.acs.org/scope/cmatex.pdf>.

To reduce the burden on our reviewers, the editors will screen out papers that, in our judgment, do not meet the requirements of significance, general interest, and/or quality that have been set for this journal. In the past, <10% of submitted papers have been rejected by the editors prior to peer review. We expect, however, that this proportion will increase significantly in 2003, especially in cases where the authors have not made it clear to the editor why the paper deserves serious consideration as a potential "leading-edge" paper for the journal.

Along with the growth in submissions has come an escalation in the frequency of questionable, sometimes unethical, practices by authors. These range from the submission of manuscripts with incremental information to more serious violations involving submission of identical manuscripts to different journals, sometimes simultaneously. *Chemistry of Materials* has implemented new procedures to detect such violations and has established disciplinary policies to address this issue, which is of significant concern to the general scientific community. Authors that have clearly violated the ACS Journal Ethics Guidelines (<http://pubs.acs.org/instruct/ethic2000.pdf>) are subject to disciplinary action, which may include a ban from submitting manuscripts to *Chemistry of Materials* for a period of time, up to 5 years, as well as notifying editors of other relevant journals of our action. We hope that by taking such steps, we will maintain the high standards of the journal while reducing reviewer burden.

Other Changes in the Guidelines for Authors

In addition to changes in scope and editorial policy, changes have also been made in the "Preparation of Manuscripts" section of our Guidelines for Authors for 2003 (<http://pubs.acs.org/instruct/cmatex.pdf>). Prospective authors are urged to read this document carefully before preparing and submitting papers for consideration. Submitted papers that deviate significantly from these guidelines, or that are difficult to read and understand because of poor organization or English language usage, will not be considered for publication. Among the changes is a requirement that a graphic suitable for use in the Table of Contents (TOC) for the issue, and an accompanying <50 word summary of the key findings of the research, must be submitted with all manuscripts, including Articles. Prior to 2003, this had been a requirement only for Short Reviews and Communications. These TOC entries will be sent with the paper for reviewer evaluation. Due to the format that will be used by the journal, the graphic **must** be supplied at the following size: 1.75-in. high \times 2-in. wide. To ensure legibility, we now require that authors submit their graphic in the journal size. See Guidelines for Authors ("Preparation of Manuscripts") to view a sample entry and to obtain more information.

Turnover of Submitted Papers

Despite the increase in the number of submitted papers that we have experienced, the editors continue

to place a high emphasis on the rapid evaluation of manuscripts. Our goal is to provide a response (acceptance, rejection, or request for revision) to the submitting authors within a 2-month period after the receipt of a paper. In 2002, we were actually able to reduce our response time to just over 8 weeks on average, thus meeting our overall goal. Sometimes the time required to complete the evaluation of a paper exceeds this norm, typically because of a lack of response from one or more of the assigned reviewers. Once a paper has been accepted for publication, appearance in electronic form, on the World Wide Web, is usually a matter of a few weeks, resulting in an overall receipt-to-publication time of about 5 months on average for Articles and somewhat less for Communications. Papers that are held up by the authors pending revision, or after receipt of proofs, can take considerably longer to be published.

Cover Illustrations and Short Review Papers

In the past several years, each issue of *Chemistry of Materials* has featured full cover illustrations taken from a paper published in that issue. When a review paper is included in that issue, the author has been given the opportunity to submit a candidate illustration for the cover. For issues without review papers, the editor has selected illustrations from one of the regular papers. Because of the considerably larger number of print issues involved, starting this year we will be using a "default" illustration for all issues that do not contain a review paper. For issues that contain review papers, we will continue to offer the authors the opportunity to contribute an illustration, which will be placed in the center area of the current cover design. We are continuing to encourage the unsolicited submission of such "Short Reviews" on key topics at the forefront of materials chemistry research and will work hard to ensure their prompt consideration for publication.

Special Issues

In addition to Short Reviews, *Chemistry of Materials* will continue to feature special issues that are dedicated to particular topics of general interest to its readers. Suggestions for future special issue topics and guest editors are also welcomed and will be considered along with those generated internally by our editors and editorial advisory board. In response to a recent suggestion from a board member, Prof. Samson Jenekhe, we have decided to organize our next special issue on the topic "Organic Electronics", with Prof. Jenekhe as a guest editor. An official announcement regarding this special issue and a call for papers will appear in a forthcoming issue. This issue is planned for publication in 2004 and will consist of both invited and contributed papers of all types (Short Reviews, Communications, and Articles). All papers will be critically reviewed to ensure that they meet the same high standards that we apply to all papers published in this journal. The special circumstances involved in putting together such a special issue will mean that strict deadlines for the submission of papers must be followed and that we will not, in general, be able to include papers that are in need of extensive revision with further reviewer evaluation.

Best wishes for a happy 2003!

Leonard V. Interrante
Editor, *Chemistry of Materials*

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