

Chemistry of Materials: A Significant Advance

The annual editorial provides an opportunity to reflect on the past year and to look forward to the one ahead. The journal's 21st year has proved to be a highly successful one, with yet another increase in the number of submissions. By September 2009, we had received 16% more papers than by the same time in 2008 and 8% more than in 2007. We predict that 2009 will bring the most submissions to *Chemistry of Materials* in its history (Figure 1). Perhaps the most obvious development this year has been a change in the layout of the journal. The changing balance between the use of online journals and printed copies and the desire to adopt more environmentally-friendly practices persuaded the American Chemical Society to convert the page format of the majority of its journals from portrait to landscape; *Chemistry of Materials* was one of the journals that underwent this change. However, if you are reading this online, like the overwhelming majority of our readers, you will note that there have been no changes to the online products.

The most recent citation reports (based on the 2008 Journal Citation Reports by Thomson Reuters) rank *Chemistry of Materials* first in the category of "Materials science, interdisciplinary", with a total of 51 245 citations garnered in 2008 and a high ISI impact factor of 5.046. The truly international scope of the journal is reflected in the fact that more than 70% of all published papers now come from outside the United States, the three top contributors being China, Japan, and Germany.

Although we are determined to maintain the exceptionally high standards of the journal, we recognize that the ever-growing number of submissions inevitably increases the workload for our reviewers and editors. We value our reviewers' precious time and expertise and do not wish to burden them with manuscripts that do not meet even the primary criteria for publication in this journal. These criteria include: the appropriateness of the paper for the journal in terms of its focus on the "chemistry" of materials, the overall quality of the manuscript, and its adherence to the "significant advance" criterion. A "significant advance" implies that it should be of broad interest, not too specialized for a general materials chemistry audience, and that it should make a substantial impact on the particular field of interest.

With this in mind, new procedures for manuscript screening were introduced in 2008. All submitted manuscripts are screened by the Editor-in-Chief and one other editor in order to assess their overall quality and potential suitability for the journal. Papers may be rejected at this stage or assigned to an appropriate subject Editor for further evaluation and possible assignment of external

reviewers. More than half the papers we receive are rejected either in the initial screening process or by the assigned Editor before submitting for external review. The efficacy of our editorial procedures is reflected in our rapid turnaround figures: the average time between the receipt of a manuscript and the author being told of our initial decision has decreased from 0.67 months in 2008 to 0.56 months in 2009, and our receipt-to-ASAP publication time averages less than four months.

In recent years, there has unfortunately been an increase in instances of "ethical misbehavior" by a small minority of authors, particularly in the forms of duplicate and incremental publication. We are rigorous in our efforts to intercept and discourage such misbehavior. Authors are required to adhere to the ACS ethical guidelines; please note in particular the following section:

B. Ethical Obligations of Authors.

Authors are expected to adhere to the following ethical guidelines; infractions may result in the application of sanctions by the editor(s), including but not limited to the suspension or revocation of publishing privileges.

7. In submitting a manuscript for publication, an author should inform the editor of related manuscripts that the author has under editorial consideration or in press. Copies of those manuscripts should be supplied to the editor, and the relationships of such manuscripts to the one submitted should be indicated.

We have discovered several cases of this nature in the past few years that have resulted in a ban on publication in *Chemistry of Materials*, for periods of up to 5 years. It is also considered unethical for an author "to submit manuscripts describing essentially the same research to more than one journal of primary publication".

8. It is improper for an author to submit manuscripts describing essentially the same research to more than one journal of primary publication, unless it is a resubmission of a manuscript rejected for or withdrawn from publication. It is generally permissible to submit a manuscript for a full paper expanding on a previously published brief preliminary account (a "communication" or "letter") of the same work. However, at the time of submission, the editor should be made aware of the earlier communication, and the preliminary communication should be cited in the manuscript.

Authors are urged to read and adhere to these and the other ACS Guidelines, which are similar to those used by most other professional journals. Copies can be downloaded from the Web sites of any of the ACS journals, by

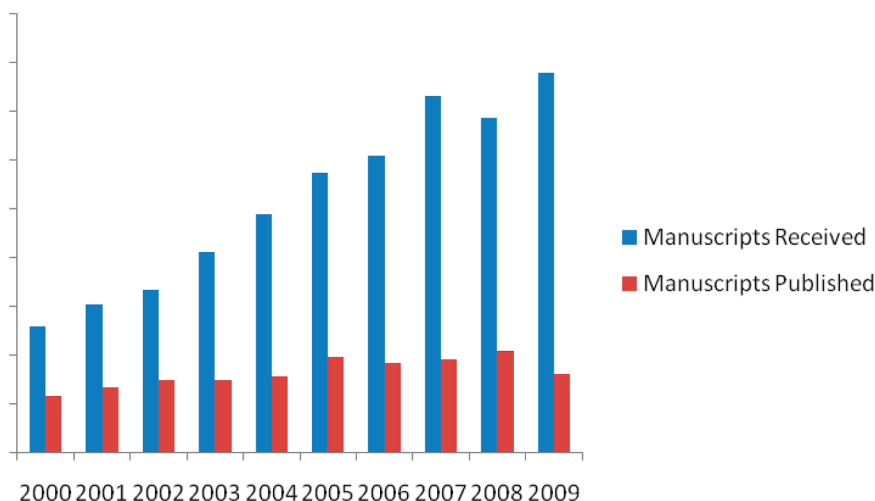


Figure 1. Manuscripts received and published, 2000–2009. Figures for 2009 are projected, based on the number of papers received and published through October 2009.

clicking on Submission & Review and then Ethical Guidelines.

Another important part of the ACS ethical guidelines reads:

Inasmuch as the reviewing of manuscripts is an essential step in the publication process, and therefore in the operation of the scientific method, every scientist has an obligation to do a fair share of reviewing.

This comes under the heading “Ethical Guidelines for Reviewers”, but I would urge all our authors to pay attention to it. The peer review process is based on reciprocity and goodwill; if you contribute to the journal, we would be grateful if you would review for it too. If you are approached to review a paper and you decide to decline, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can assign an alternative reviewer. This helps to expedite the processing of manuscripts and to facilitate the timely publication of important research.

Coming in February 2010 is a special issue devoted to the Materials Chemistry of Energy Conversion, edited by John Greedan, Susan Kauzlarich, and myself with Sossina Haile

as Guest Editor. This issue will contain invited review articles addressing the key areas in this research field, together with a selection of submitted papers.

Next year will feature a special issue on π -Functional Materials, edited by Jean-Luc Bredas and Elsa Reichmanis and Guest Editor, Seth Marder (all at Georgia Tech). The Call for Papers appears in the same issue as this Editorial (and on the journal’s Web site), with a submission deadline of August 1, 2010.

We say farewell to those members of our Editorial Advisory Board who have come to the end of their term of office. We are indebted to them for all their advice and support and we are delighted to extend a warm welcome to our new members. As ever, we thank all our contributors, reviewers, and readers for their continued interest and support. The editors and staff of *Chemistry of Materials* wish you a happy and successful 2010.

Peter Battle
Editor

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