

Editorial

Acta Crystallographica Section A is traditionally devoted to the 'foundations of crystallography' and will remain so. Crystallography is to be understood in its broadest sense. As defined by Helen Megaw, it is 'the branch of science concerned with the description of the structure and properties of condensed matter in terms of the spatial relationships of atoms and interatomic forces in an extended array'. This definition, written many years before the discovery of quasi-crystals, certainly includes extended arrays that do not necessarily have translational symmetry in three-dimensional space. In my understanding, crystallography also includes the study of defects or imperfections with respect to an ideal structure. *Acta A* will therefore continue to cover, on the one hand, all experimental and theoretical studies of the properties of the arrangements of atoms, ions and molecules in condensed matter, ideal or real, and of their symmetry and, on the other, the theoretical and experimental aspects of the various methods used to determine these arrangements. It will remain the high standard reference journal that it is in these domains.

There are some changes in the types of paper published in *Acta A*. They will consist of:

Original full-length *Research Papers*, which should not normally exceed 15 journal pages (about 15 000 words). Authors are invited to submit these articles to one of the Co-editors, taking into account their areas of expertise, which are advertised on the inside front cover.

Short Communications, which correspond to a merger of the previous *Short* and *Fast Communications*, and which should be directly submitted to the Section Editor. They are intended for the presentation of topics of

limited scope or for preliminary announcements of novel research findings. They will be refereed promptly and printed as quickly as possible using desktop publishing methods or prioritized typesetting. Their length should not exceed 1500 words (2 journal pages) and authors are recommended to submit these papers electronically either *via* e-mail or on a diskette, along with a hard copy.

Lead Articles, commissioned by the Section Editor, which will remain authoritative and comprehensive in character. They may be introductions to a field, state-of-the-art reviews or prospective discussions of new areas. These *Lead Articles* have proved in the past to be very useful and the aim is to publish one per issue. They will continue to be highlighted on the relevant covers of *Acta A* and will carry brief bibliographical details of their author(s). The Section Editor will welcome any suggestions on suitable subjects for *Lead Articles*.

Topical Reviews, which are an entirely new type of paper, and which can be either submitted to the Section Editor or commissioned by him on 'hot' topics and highly focused areas of current research interest. They are aimed both at the specialist and at a more general audience and should be of limited length (10 journal pages or about 10 000 words).

Letters to the Editor, which are to be sent either to the Section Editor or to the Editor-in-Chief.

The updated *Notes for Authors*, which follow this Editorial, describe submission procedures for the various types of article.

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Editor, Section A