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Editorial

This year will see several important changes to the publication and presentation of *Acta Crystallographica Section C*. These include the mandatory requirement that submissions be electronic, the availability on the Internet of *Contents* information for each issue and the introduction of a listing of unpublished structures deposited in the Cambridge database. I would like to use this opportunity to give the reasons for introducing these changes, as they will significantly affect both readers and authors of this journal.

The new submission requirements for *Section C*, which are detailed in the 1996 *Notes for Authors* at the back of this issue, state that papers must be submitted as electronic CIFs. Advance notice of this was given in last year's editorial when it was clear that all authors had access to CIF generation software. In the last quarter of 1995, 90% of *Section C* manuscripts were submitted in CIF format. The availability of CIF software has also led to other non-IUCr journals accepting CIF submissions as well. The attraction of this approach is obvious: electronic submissions are faster, less error-prone and more cost-effective for authors and publishers. These are factors which are particularly important to *Section C* because of its large number of papers. Most importantly, they will help to contain increasing publication costs, and to cope with expected increases in submissions due to area-detector diffractometers.

We believe that removing the hard-copy submission option will not disadvantage any particular category of author. The few remaining hard-copy submissions to *Section C* are distributed over a range of countries and laboratories, and appear to reflect personal habit rather than a technical limitation. I certainly understand why those, who, like myself, started structural studies before the advent of computers, regret the demise of the traditional submission processes, but there are powerful technical and economic reasons why this must happen.

Starting this month the IUCr will be offering some new publication and data services via the Internet. For example, the *Contents* pages for this and future issues can be viewed on the World Wide Web at the address http://www.iucr.ac.uk/journals/acta/tocs/actac/actac.html. For those of you that do not yet have a WWW client facility, the same information is also available via anonymous FTP from ftp://ftp.iucr.ac.uk/journals/acta/tocs/ or by e-mail server; send the message `HELP' to sendtocs@iucr.ac.uk for full information. An important new service is also available for authors. The editorial status and publication details of a submission will be available by accessing the WWW facility http://www.iucr.ac.uk/journals/status.html, a further enticement for those of you who are contemplating the installation of WWW client software.

The above-mentioned services are the first stage of more extensive electronic publishing facilities that will become available for IUCr publications in the future. The new services, which are intended to be complementary to the current hard-copy publications, will, for the present, be available free of charge. More comprehensive electronic services, such as full paper delivery and sets of annual issues on CD-ROM, are under development. These may involve access charges from the outset.

These publication changes will be welcomed by most readers and authors; they may be a cause for concern for others who see electronic services as the thin end of the wedge that eventually leads to the demise of hard-copy journals. Be assured that our planning focus is on increasing access to data and publications for all scientists. New services will be introduced in such a way as to be complementary to the existing publication modes, and at a rate that can be accommodated by the average reader. It is always possible that one mode will eventually replace another, but this will only happen when there are significant benefits to the vast majority of users. Such was the case with the CIF submission requirement.

Section C will, towards the middle of this year, begin listing the titles and authors of unpublished structures deposited with the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre (CCDC). The decision to publish these listings has not been an easy one. While this service is certain to be useful to the structural chemistry community, IUCr journals do not usually include non-peer-reviewed material (apart, that is, from Congress Abstracts which form a separate issue), and there was concern that the service may be interpreted as a diminution in our commitment to the peer-review process. Nothing could be further from the truth! The deposition titles will be presented in a different format to emphasize that they are not a *Section C* publication. It should be pointed out, however, that the data items stored by the CCDC will have been thoroughly checked, and the CCDC is prepared to supply details of the individual structures on request.

As stated above, a revised version of the *Notes for Authors* is published in this issue. These notes stress the importance of concise, scientifically complete, encapsulations of the structural information. This format is well suited to CIF submissions. Further emphasis has been placed on well prepared figures (both in terms of print quality and information content) and the judicious choice of the geometrical data to be published and discussed. It cannot be overemphasized that the concise presentation style of *Section C* papers is intended to highlight the data and text that is of special importance to the published structure.

Authors should also be aware that the Chester staff now apply stricter criteria in checking if submissions are deficient or of inadequate publication standard. Papers not meeting these criteria will be returned directly to authors for correction rather than being forwarded to the Co-editors for review. This early filtering is part of an effort to reduce publication times and to accommodate the increasing number of submissions.

To help authors pre-check their CIF data and text, the Chester Office has set up e-mail servers which automatically validate data and print CIF text. The `checkcif' and `printcif' facilities are described in the *Notes for Authors*, and authors are strongly urged to use these prior to making a submission to *Section C*. There is also an increasing range of software available that can be used to check CIF data locally.

Information on how to obtain this software is available from the WWW site http://www.iucr.ac.uk/cif/home.html.

Finally, authors are reminded that Section 3.6 of the Notes for Authors contains advice about the most commonly encountered problems with submitted papers. Authors should read this advice carefully. For example, the treatment of absorption continues to be a problem. *Section C* Co-editors will insist that absorption corrections are appropriate to the material, the crystal shape, and mounting. This, as with other methodologies, will continue to be reviewed critically by us. The IUCr journals have a reputation for data integrity, and the increased automation and electronification of *Section C* has not diminished our resolve to maintain these high standards.

S. R. HALL

Editor, Section C
