

Introducing Letters in *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*

From conception to distribution, ideas can be tested and widely reviewed in a fashion never before dreamed of by our scientific predecessors. Communicated by handwritten letter in the mid-1800s, Charles Darwin's ideas could be spread only to a select few "reviewers" (he sent or received more than 15,000). Distance and form were limitations. Fortunately, these limitations no longer exist for Internet-enabled communities. Moreover, in some cases this rapidity is a critical advantage.

Situations can arise in food and agricultural science when urgency can be important to our community and society at large. Issues of food contamination are an example. A manuscript describing a novel detection method for *Listeria* in cantaloupes could save lives. Other examples of candidates for a more rapid communication include (but are not limited to)

- a new or improved analytical method for melamine or another toxicant of current interest;
- a newly identified chemical responsible for off-flavor in beer or wine;
- a newly synthesized/identified pesticidal chemical with unusual target organism specificity;
- a micromolar NMR method for detection of phenolics or other bioactives in plant extracts;
- a method for improved recovery of PrPSC Scrapie Agent from potentially infected animals;
- a naturally occurring potential replacement for problem fumigants; and
- a previously unrecognized biomass source for biofuel production.

The *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* has been working for years to reduce our submission-to-Web times for manuscripts. In my opinion, we have done a good job. In the past four years, we have reduced this value by nearly 10%. We continue to work on improvements in this area. This is all a part of the Journal's efforts to better serve its authors and community.

As part of that effort, we are introducing a new manuscript type to the journal, Letters, in the tradition of Darwin but with much more speed and fewer ink stains. These manuscripts will appear in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* but will be subject to a different submission and review process that emphasizes time to publication without sacrificing the rigors of peer review. Letter-type communications, lacking some of the boilerplate of conventional manuscripts (e.g., reduced commentary on prior literature, elimination of methods that can be represented by a reference, extensive tables better left to Supporting Information), seem to be a logical step for some publishable ideas, but not all. Some manuscripts will continue to require more extensive descriptions to be complete and reproducible by others. But if you can scan a manuscript in 10 min or so, and say to yourself "I get it" or "great idea," why labor with the lengthier version that in essence repeats the details of the discovery? As you can imagine, we do not want to burden the reviewers and editors with these types of

assignments unless they are brief (2000 words and fewer than four graphic elements or less), timely, and urgent.

I invite you to submit these types of manuscripts as Letters in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, and I look forward to reading your submissions. There will be a learning curve as we (authors, editors, reviewers) prepare, receive, process, and publish manuscripts in this new category such that a future editorial (or two) may be needed to refine the parameters for this new category. You are welcome to send me your thoughts or comments on this new category by e-mail (jnseiber@ucdavis.edu).

James N. Seiber, Editor

■ AUTHOR INFORMATION

Notes

Views expressed in this editorial are those of the author and not necessarily the view of the ACS.

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