

Letter to the Editor

Journal of MicroColumn Separations

Sir,

Your recent review of the new *Journal of MicroColumn Separations*¹ came as a rather abrupt surprise to me and to many others who have since voiced their opinions concerning the review. While I am a firm supporter of the practice of close scrutiny, evaluation, and fair criticism of scientific reports and publications, I also believe that this practice should be undertaken according to acceptable prescribed rules of objectivity and fairness. In the case of this review, these rules were blatantly violated, offending me personally and the scientific publishing community in a broader sense. Several of the more important points of concern are as follows.

(1) While there is a precedent for journals to publish reviews of other journals, extreme care must be taken to ensure objectivity and impartiality, especially when the journal under review is a competing journal. It is unfortunate that for your review of *The Journal of MicroColumn Separations*, (a) the review was based only on the first issue and (b) the review was unsigned. In most cases, journals are not considered for review until they have been published for a full year. Only after such a period of time can proper perspective be given on matters such as public acceptance, timeliness of publication, scope of coverage and consistency of quality. Your review, based on one issue only, is critical through implication of what *might* be (e.g., Are there too many journals? Will there be sufficient material? Will it have broad enough distribution? Will it provide good service?). Furthermore, reputable reviews are usually solicited from impartial, but knowledgeable, reviewers who are willing to sign their names and back their opinions.

(2) Whether or not the *Journal of Chromatography* or anyone else is happy about the situation, readers *are* supporting the creation of more specialized journals. In the field of chromatography alone, *Preparative Chromatography*, *Chirality*, *Journal of Planar Chromatography* and *The Journal of MicroColumn Separations* are among the new, specific journals that have recently appeared. Scientists specializing in particular areas of chromatography research often feel that their work is “buried” in more general journals and, therefore, is not being read by their colleagues to the degree desired. Furthermore, readers often must wade through voluminous amounts of material to find the important “kernels” of interest to them. In short, pertinent information is more efficiently and less expensively disseminated through specialized journals.

(3) The comments in the journal review concerning the level of rigor built into the review process for papers submitted to *The Journal of MicroColumn Separations*, and the comments made using one paper as an example, were very unprofessional. As

a participant in the review process for many journals, I can safely claim that no journal adheres to a more careful and rigorous review process than does *The Journal of MicroColumn Separations*.

In conclusion, I feel that your review was inappropriately handled, and that you have violated the most important objective of the scientific publishing industry—that of setting in print correct information. *The Journal of MicroColumn Separations* has been quite successful in finding its public and is growing at a healthy rate. Despite your criticism of the title, we elected to focus the journal on the separation sciences that utilize microcolumns—an area in which the boundaries between the different techniques become less distinct. Every effort is being made to continuously improve the scientific quality of the journal and to respond to the needs and desires of the modern analytical community.

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Reply

The Editors accept as reasonable the two main complaints in the accompanying letter: unsigned reviews and a review of one issue of a new journal. It was decided in June 1989 that book reviews accepted after that date must be signed. Future requests from publishers for reviews of a single issue of a new journal will be viewed with reserve.

Editors, Journal of Chromatography