

## Fifteen Years with JOC

For the past 15 years I have had the privilege of serving as the Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Organic Chemistry*, which has been one of the most important venues for publishing fundamental research in organic chemistry for over 75 years. As Editor-in-Chief, I have worked to continue and enhance that tradition through the rapid changes—one might even say upheavals—that have occurred in scientific research and publishing.

The most significant development in scientific publishing during the past 15 years has been the move to electronic publishing and dissemination of information on the Internet. The advantages are undeniable. Manuscripts can be submitted, evaluated, revised, and published much faster than before. When I became Editor-in-Chief, these aspects of publishing were all handled by mailing paper copies at each stage of the process. Submission and review could be expedited by express delivery, but the process was still slow and costly by today's standards. I recall receiving a manuscript from Australia just after the software for web submission and review was activated. The manuscript was reviewed promptly and favorably, minor revisions were made, and the manuscript was accepted within a week of submission. That process could have easily taken two months previously.

Similar advancements have taken place in the quality of the published versions of manuscripts made possible by online publishing. Color is now widely used in figures, schemes, and tables; links are available to literature cited in the publication; and the overall appearance of the publications has substantially improved. While these features are not unique to JOC, the level of service provided by the production staff for JOC in Columbus, Ohio, which edits and composes the final version of the manuscripts published, is superb. Galley proofs are typically sent to authors within a week after a manuscript is approved by an editor.

Electronic publishing has controversial aspects as well. One of these is the recent trend to post manuscripts not vetted by peer review on preprint servers. While the jury is still out on the value of this approach, JOC has continued to follow the path of vetting its manuscripts for scientific rigor buttressed with a sound experimental section. I am concerned that the permanent posting of unvetted manuscripts online may become a repository for junk science that can be exploited to the disadvantage of the discipline.

Another consequence of electronic publishing is a trend toward separating the experimental section from the rest of a manuscript, with the result that it often receives less attention by reviewers and no editorial attention during the composition of the final publication. Sometimes even the most careful attempts to describe experiments inadvertently omit a crucial point necessary for success. I found, with few exceptions, that authors appreciated having their manuscripts thoroughly examined by JOC staff and by reviewers who generously devoted their time to provide thoughtful critiques of manuscripts. Because well-constructed experimental protocols are essential for evaluating and extending published research, JOC

publishes all of the details needed to reproduce and verify a procedure in the body of the publication.

While JOC has long published Articles and Notes, its offerings were expanded to include Perspectives and Synopses to better cover developing areas in organic chemistry. In addition, Articles highly rated by the reviewers are published as Featured Articles with expedited handling. They are placed at the beginning of an issue and often are featured in cover art. More recently, JOC has published themed issues where all papers describe important developments in a focused area.

Overall, in the highly competitive environment of the last 15 years, JOC has maintained its top position among its peers and has expanded its influence. The number of Articles and Notes submitted to JOC has steadily increased as have the number of citations to the journal—now in excess of 100000 each year—and its impact factor. This would not have been possible without the quantity and quality of manuscripts submitted to the journal. The authors were also helpful with their constructive comments regarding the review process. A major concern was the speed with which their manuscripts were processed. In response to concerns about the time to publication, the JOC editors made a special effort to expedite reviews and were assisted by reviewers who provided comments in a timely manner. This year, the median time from submission of a manuscript to the first decision was only 3 weeks, and the time from submission to acceptance was just over 7 weeks. Final decisions on manuscripts that did not require substantial revisions were often made within 4 weeks. With these statistics, JOC maintains one of the fastest processing times among all ACS journals other than those that focus on communications and letters.

Much of the success of JOC has come from having outstanding Associate Editors, whose names appear in the masthead for this issue, and the efficient and careful JOC staff. Many of the innovations in the journal came from suggestions they made during annual meetings. Shawn Darby and Katie Turner were exceptional in their roles as Coordinating Editors. It is a title that poorly conveys the scope and responsibility of the position in managing the office, communicating with authors and reviewers, securing copyright approval for cover art, and numerous other tasks. Peter Harvey was indispensable in his role as the Data Analyst. In addition to monitoring the quality of data reported in JOC and ensuring that the guidelines for authors were accurate and up to date, he provided me and the Associate Editors with well-researched information that helped us set rigorous but reasonable standards. Midway through my term, Tammy Hanna was appointed as the first Managing Editor for JOC. Among her many duties in outreach and development, Tammy's efforts were absolutely essential for developing and enhancing Perspectives, Synopses, and Featured Articles. I will miss working with all of the people in the JOC crew.

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The new year will begin with Scott Miller assuming the job of Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Organic Chemistry*. My staff and I have had a productive, collegial experience working with Scott on the relocation of the journal office from the University of Utah to Yale. I am certain that JOC will prosper under Scott's able leadership with strong support from ACS Publications.

**Dale Poulter**

#### ■ AUTHOR INFORMATION

##### Notes

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