

Editorial 2004: The Next Five Years

Five years have passed since the American Chemical Society (ACS), in collaboration with the Scholarly Publishing & Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), launched *Organic Letters*, the first of a series of reasonably priced journals directed at coping with the rapidly escalating cost of scientific publications arising from the private sector. By all accounts this enterprise has been a major success. *Organic Letters* is now entering its second five years, having established itself as a major venue for the rapid publication of high impact, high quality organic research, including bioorganic and medicinal chemistry, physical and theoretical organic chemistry, natural products isolation and synthesis, new synthetic methods, and organometallic and materials chemistry. The variety of exciting chemistry found in each issue is truly remarkable. *Organic Letters* is “**exactly where you want to be.**”

Indicative of this success, the ISI impact factor for *Organic Letters* continues to rise (3.67 for 2001, 3.71 for 2002). *Organic Letters* papers are now among the most requested from *Chemical Abstracts*, according to *CAS Spotlight*. Moreover, the number of submissions in 2003 increased approximately 15% over last year. Volume 5 will contain 1276 Letters in 5164 pages from 41 countries. Currently, the *Organic Letters* web site averages over 200,000 hits per month, and we are on target for having 2.5 million views of our web Letters in 2003; almost 1 million more hits than in 2002. The Editors and I would again like to thank the chemical community for the extraordinary support of *Organic Letters*.

Over 95% of the manuscripts submitted to *Organic Letters* come to us via the ACS web site, Paragon. Clearly the ACS's early embracement of the Web has revolutionized scientific publication. Given the extraordinary use of the Web for submitting manuscripts to *Organic Letters*, the Editors and I are considering eliminating hard copy manuscript submissions. However, before making a final decision, we would like to hear from the community whether this policy would cause serious hardships. Please email your thoughts to us at orglett@sas.upenn.edu.

The Editors and I continue to strive to maintain and improve the quality of *Organic Letters*. Our goal is to attract and publish the highest levels of research results in all areas of organic chemistry. To this end, beginning in 2004 we will request that all authors provide Supporting Information with

each manuscript. For the sake of consistency, guidelines for compound characterization will be essentially the same as those for *The Journal of Organic Chemistry*. For details, please see the Section on Compound Characterization in the *Organic Letters* 2004 Guidelines for Authors.

Central to the success of the first five years has been our authors and reviewers. They, along with the Editors, have set high standards for *Organic Letters*. The unselfish effort of reviewers toward ensuring acceptance of only the most significant research is truly laudatory. Experienced authors recognize that reviewers' comments often significantly improve manuscripts. As of the beginning of December, over 2200 of you have provided more than 4600 reviews in 2003. Certainly the Editors and I, in particular, and the Organic Chemistry Community in general, are grateful that so many of the experts we ask to evaluate *Organic Letters* manuscripts are willing to contribute their valuable time and expertise to build a meaningful and accurate record of state-of-the-art chemical research. It is only by these efforts that we can maintain and improve the quality of the manuscripts accepted for rapid publication in *Organic Letters*. We appreciate especially those critical reviews providing specific reasons for or against publication. Comments on the adequacy of the experimental data with suggestions for additional data or experiments, if thought necessary, will also improve the quality of the research published in *Organic Letters*.

Evaluation of research is a difficult task. At times Editors may disagree with reviewers, or reviewers may have conflicting opinions. According to our Guidelines for Authors, Editors, in such cases, have the authority to make decisions based on his/her own evaluation of the paper and his/her knowledge of the reviewers' expertise. Authors should keep in mind that, due to the increasing volume of excellent manuscripts, the Editors may decide not to publish a paper which, although the science is sound, does not—in the estimation of the Editor—have the degree of novelty or impact required for rapid publication as a Letter in a *broadly focused* journal such as *Organic Letters*. Currently, we reject approximately 50% of the papers that are submitted. One final word on the review process. At times it may be appropriate to revise and resubmit a manuscript that has been previously declined by *Organic Letters* or another journal. To ensure a rapid and effective review process, authors

are requested to disclose this fact in their cover letter and indicate explicitly the specific changes made in response to reviewer comments. At the request of the author, we will be happy to send the manuscript out for peer review without informing the reviewers about the history of the manuscript.

As we enter our fifth year, there have been several changes to the rank of the Associate Editors. Professors Karl Hale, University College London, and Fraser Stoddart, University of California, Los Angeles, joined us in July of 2003. I had announced Karl's appointment last year, and I take this opportunity to thank him again and to welcome Fraser to the *Organic Letters* enterprise. All of us will benefit from Fraser's expertise in molecular recognition and materials chemistry as well as his years of experience on various Editorial Boards such as *Angewandte Chemie*. Finally, Professor John Vederas stepped down in October to allow

more time for other commitments. I thank John for his efforts on behalf of *Organic Letters*.

Peter Beak also leaves at the end of 2003. Peter has a long and important history of service to ACS journals. I was particularly pleased that Peter agreed to become the first of the founding editors of *Organic Letters*. His early advice, expertise, and help as we launched *Organic Letters* was invaluable. Peter, thank you! Fortunately, we will continue to have access to Peter's insight, as he joins the *Organic Letters* Editorial Advisory Board.

I am pleased to announce that Hung-wen (Ben) Liu, University of Texas, Austin, will be joining us in 2004 as an Associate Editor. Professor Liu will bring considerable expertise in the areas of bioorganic and physical organic chemistry. We welcome Ben to *Organic Letters* and look forward to working with him.

Amos B. Smith, III

Editor-in-Chief
December 5, 2003

OL030139P