

Editorial

Organic Letters: Now in the 21st Century

I write to provide you, our authors, readers and reviewers, with an update on *Organic Letters*. In our second decade, now well into the 21st century, we continue to thrive and to enjoy great support and respect from the Chemistry Community broadly based. Pleasingly, for the past decade, *Organic Letters* has been the highest-impact communications journal in Organic Chemistry. The latest 2010 ISI Impact Factor (2010) is 5.25. Moreover, we see strong evidence of an increase in our impact and use from our website. During the first 9 months of 2011 we received 1.6 million views of the *Organic Letters* home page. Article requests have also increased by 12% in 2011. Most significantly, submissions to *Organic Letters* have increased this year, now 10% over last year's submission rate. Clearly, as stated in our inaugural 1999 Editorial, "*Organic Letters* is exactly where you want to be!!!!"

As we continue to grow, the Associate Editors and I are constantly evaluating ways to ensure that *Organic Letters* provides our readers with the very broadest of high impact research in all areas of organic chemistry. To ensure further that we publish the very best of the best, we continue to fine-tune our guidelines for certain subject areas. As now stated in the guidelines, one-step organic transformations must be both innovative and effective on the preparative scale. Submitted manuscripts relating to analytical ion detection protocols not only must report effective detection methods but importantly, should also involve innovative synthetic chemistry to access the detection system. For designed structures, if the design, synthesis, and/or spectral properties of a new chemotype are not exceptionally novel, then data such as biological activities, binding efficiencies, and/or materials properties should be included to justify the significance of the designed system. New organic electronic materials for example need to illustrate either new synthetic methods and/or interesting device properties to merit rapid publication.

We are also pleased to report that our improved home page now provides convenient searching tools for our published research. The most read, most cited, and the related content are available from the HTML version of

the published Letters. Despite the current economic hard times, the ACS Publication Division continues to seek *and to achieve* ways to employ the digital environment to enhance the content of all American Chemical Society journals. The Associate Editors and I would of course welcome your ideas and suggestions on how the ACS might enhance the electronic environment to improve *Organic Letters* and/or other ACS journals. Clearly, the electronic revolution has moved us into an era where access to information is becoming ever more convenient to find and to use.

Collectively however, we must ensure that our traditional, high scholarship values are not diminished by the evolving electronic environment. At a time when information is so easily found via the web, authors must remain highly diligent in ensuring that they have carefully searched the published literature to place their new research in the proper context, and importantly, with appropriate acknowledgement to previous work. Given the ease of finding information employing electronic web sources such as Scifinder and Scifinder-Scholar, there can be no excuses for the lack of attribution to earlier work. Unfortunately, from time to time we receive emails from reviewers and readers regarding related work(s) not cited in a published paper. We of course bring this information to the Author's attention of the authors, and we recommend, indeed expect, collegial solutions (i.e., publication of an Addition and Correction) where appropriate. We all employ literature citations when reading and evaluating published information; continued lack of provision of accurate, complete and fair attribution on the part of authors will simply not be tolerated by the Editors of *Organic Letters*.

Equally worrisome, given the easy access to and reuse of electronic text, is an increasing temptation to borrow text from one's own previous publications and/or from that of others. We have had several instances where introductory text from an earlier paper has been used almost verbatim. The Associate Editors and I would like to stress to all authors that, even if the work involved is carefully cited, using identical or nearly identical sentences from one's own

publications, or that from other authors, is plagiarism, unless the sentences are clearly designated with quotation marks at the beginning and end of the sentences in question. Even in such cases, extensive use of previously published text is viewed as inappropriate.

Given that organic chemists are avid and astute readers of the literature, and our reviewers are well versed on the subjects of the papers they are asked to review, not surprisingly we have had several readers and/or reviewers report instances of possible plagiarism or extensive fragmented publication of research results. We are grateful to these alert readers and thoroughly investigate each valid case that comes to our attention, notifying any offenders. If a problem is found, future submissions from offenders are scrutinized carefully. Repeated or serious infractions can have severe consequences for authors. Our job description as Editors does not include “policeman”; however, as stated in the latest version of the ACS Ethical Guidelines, “ethical...infractions may result in the application of sanctions by the Editor(s), including but not limited to the suspension or revocation of publishing privileges.”

Authors should also be aware that we exercise considerable diligence in examining new submissions, checking authors and titles to identify undisclosed resubmissions of rejected papers, and in particular, checking for potential “fragmented” publication of results. It is in everyone’s best interest to have a reliable repository of research results with appropriate authorship, without undue repetition and/or fragmentation of results. *Organic Letters* Editors regularly discuss and debate what data and procedures are necessary

to ensure that we publish reliable reproducible work and that the work is properly and fairly attributed to the persons that produce the research. We welcome input from the community on this topic.

On a very positive note, remarkable improvements by the ACS Publication Division to the manuscript submission/tracking system, Paragon Plus, along with the hard work of our Editorial Assistants in each office have facilitated the publication processing time, cutting the average time from submission to decision from 20 to 14 days according to our latest manuscript analysis. Of course we strive for a successful balance between a fast and a well considered decision. When necessary we will take all of the time needed to obtain a full and fair evaluation of the research submitted to *Organic Letters*. Having said that, **Organic Letters is clearly the fastest way to publish your results!!!** In this regard, we greatly appreciate all of the efforts that our reviewers are willing to provide, “on short notice,” in evaluating the *Organic Letters* manuscripts.

Let me reiterate, all of us here at *Organic Letters* highly value the unselfish service that the reviewers perform. Quoting Editor-in-Chief Richard Armstrong, from his editorial in *Biochemistry*, January 2005: “The two most important ingredients for an excellent journal are great articles and rigorous peer review.” My heartfelt thanks to all of our authors, who trust us with their work and to our reviewers who are the essential partners in maintaining, and increasing the high standards of *Organic Letters*. Finally, I thank the *Organic Letters* Associate Editors for their great help and support. What a great pleasure it is to work with such a dedicated group of scholars.

Amos B. Smith, III*
Editor-in-Chief