

# Organic Process Research & Development

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## Editorial

### The Importance of Adequate and Accurate References

I see many papers come across my desk which are excellent in every way, but the references leave a lot to be desired. Since journals are judged these days, in part, by their impact factor (i.e. the number of references to that journal by authors), it is clear that this subject is important.

What I have found is that some authors fail to mention key articles. For example, a recent submission to the journal was on a topic on which *Organic Process Research & Development* (OPRD) had published a special feature section issue 2 years ago, but there was no reference to this issue (nor to any article in that issue). In some cases, I suspect that authors deliberately do not cite a competitor's work, hoping that the reviewers will not find out that there is competition. Usually our reviewers are not so easily fooled.

Even worse is when authors fail to cite their own work. There is usually only one reason this is done, because the work submitted is similar to a previous publication—this is termed self-plagiarism! Unfortunately, it is becoming all too common as the pressure to publish and the reliance placed on numbers of publications increases. We have already spotted two cases in 2002. This is why it is important for each reviewer or referee to check that any paper submitted for publication has not been published before.

Of course there are cases when OPRD will accept work which has been published previously:

(a) when a preliminary communication has been published and the author is submitting a full paper with expanded scope, discussion, and experimental work.

(b) when work has been patented. Patents are, in my view, only a legal document and do not constitute a prior publication.

(c) when work has been presented as a lecture to a limited audience and the conference proceedings are not widely available. We encourage authors to write up the lecture, hopefully expanding it and adding new material.

If authors cite their previous work, patents, and any public lectures given, then it has been made clear that there has been some form of prior publication, all of which should be acceptable if it is in one of the three categories above.

Authors should also, however, cite articles which have already been submitted to other journals but are not yet published, since it will be impossible for a referee to track this down but might be a way of self-plagiarising.

The ethics should be fairly clear to any scientist, but if in doubt, authors should consult the Ethical Guidelines to Publication of Chemical Research, last updated in January 2000, recently published on pages 19A–21A in the last (January 2003) issue of OPRD, and also available at the journal's web site (<http://pubs.acs.org/oprd>).

My last point is about accuracy in references. The ACS sees many mistakes in references (I have been guilty in the Highlights section), and while staff catches some of them, they cannot detect small, subtle errors. Please double check all references in the paper prior to submitting the paper to the Editor. Do not quote a reference from another paper without first checking its accuracy. This is becoming ever more important as we move to electronic formats where references can be linked—but only if they are accurate!

### Safety Related Articles

It has been suggested, after the success of the Special Feature on Safety of Chemical Processes in issue No. 6 of 2002, that the last issue of each year should, in part, contain articles related to safety. It is hoped that, in addition, a “volunteer” will come forward to write a review of the safety literature so that the last issue of OPRD each year becomes associated with safety. I have been told that many safety-related papers do not have a natural home; OPRD is of course the obvious journal in which important process issues such as safety can be published.

These safety-related articles will appear in the same issue as the Special Feature section on Crystallization and Polymorphism for which the deadline for submission of papers is the end of May 2003.

Trevor Laird  
Editor

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