

Editorial: It's your choice: Pick the most suitable place for your submission

Physical Review B publishes a wide variety of papers in all subject areas of condensed matter and materials physics. The journal is subdivided into three types of papers: regular articles, Rapid Communications, and in a section designed for other short papers, Brief Reports. We strongly encourage authors to take a realistic view in choosing a journal for submission, and to provide reasoning for the particular section chosen. An honest and realistic evaluation of the impact and importance of a particular submission does a great service to all participants in the publication process: editors, referees, and the authors themselves.

This is particularly important now because *Physical Review Letters* is reaffirming its long-established standards, which will have the effect of making acceptance there more difficult. It is incumbent on authors to really decide before submitting a paper to PRL that it belongs there. "Rolling the dice" is not the optimal way to go. If a paper does not meet the stricter criteria for PRL, it is better submitted directly to the appropriate *Physical Review* journal. Processing of the work will be much speedier that way, particularly for submissions to Rapid Communications.

If the editors of PRL have declined a paper, we encourage prompt transfer of the work for consideration at PR without undue dragging out of the review process, unless you strongly believe that the decision was incorrect. A significant advantage of this course of action to the authors is that the previous history of the review process is always available to the PR editors, unlike a submission to a non-APS journal. In many cases, PR editors make offers of immediate publication without further external review.

Whichever path your paper takes to PRB you can be assured that it will be dealt with carefully and with all deliberate speed.

Generally it can be stated with confidence that PRB provides a publication vehicle for high-quality, not just hot or fashionable, physics for all subfields of condensed matter and materials physics from all over the world. For example, scientists from 80 countries have submitted work to the journal during the past year. Some of the work spans a wide range of interests while the majority of the papers are of interest to far smaller groups.

This inclusive role of PRB and the breadth of the subject matter necessarily imply that, despite our efforts to continually improve the standards by being more selective in our acceptance criteria, we still publish a substantial number of papers every year (5800 in 2008). This is despite a considerable drop in our acceptance rate from 70% in 2005 to around 58% in the past year. Popular measures such as impact factor do not adequately represent the value of a large journal such as PRB. High impact factors are possible only for review journals or for small journals that typically concentrate on a few emerging fields.

For instance, the overall impact factor for PRB in 2008 is 3.322 (as obtained from ISI Journal Citation Reports). Consider: If we were to theoretically break PRB down into smaller pieces, the Rapid Communications section for example, would have an impact factor of 4.4. Broken down further by subfields (and with a resulting much smaller overall number of papers) the impact factors for PRB papers in emerging or hot topics such as graphene, multiferroics, and metamaterials would be 10.1, 7.6, and 6.5, respectively, while the numbers for mature topics such as spin glasses, Kondo physics, and Luttinger physics are expectedly lower at 2.3, 2.9, and 2.5. Also note that the impact factor of PRB would be close to 10 if it published only its 1000 most important and presumably top-cited papers each year, but this action would be antithetical to the mission of the journal.

We believe that it is in the best interests of the research community, and the funding agencies that enable the research, to judge each paper individually, for its own content and quality, and not by a single number given to a journal as a whole by some ratings system. Keep these issues in mind when next you submit your work.

Peter D. Adams
Editor

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