

## Letter from the Editor—January 2011

Dear *JCIM* Community,

2010 was a banner year for *JCIM*, especially since it marked 50 years from its beginning as the *Journal of Chemical Documentation*. The key associated festivities occurred at the National ACS Meeting in Boston on August 22 and 23 including a reception and symposium featuring 10 speakers, who have been regular contributors to the journal. Support from the ACS Publications Division for these activities was most appreciated.

### SOME STATISTICS FOR 2010

509 manuscripts were submitted to *JCIM* in 2010. This represents a minor change from the 505 in 2009. About 45% of manuscripts that are submitted are accepted for publication. For accepted articles, the average time from manuscript submission to ASAP appearance is 17.6 weeks. About 20% of the published articles were from Asia, 45%, from Europe, and 33%, from the Western Hemisphere. The ISI impact factor for *JCIM* for 2009 was 3.88, the highest value ever; the impact factor for 2008 was 3.64. Though there is much debate about the significance of impact factors, they appear to be engrained in the publishing world.

### REJECTION WITHOUT EXTERNAL REVIEW

This is common practice for most scientific journals. Over the past decade there have been large increases in submissions to most distinguished journals. In response to this and the associated desire to not overburden the reviewing community, about 35% of submissions to *JCIM* are rejected without external review. The decision is made by one of the Editors with or without consultation with other Editors or members of the Editorial Advisory Board. The typical reasons for rejection are (a) the content does not fit well with the scope of *JCIM* such that submission to an alternative journal is more appropriate, (b) the content is narrow in scope such that many similar submissions could be envisioned with minor change in the systems studied, and (c) the content is routine or does not represent a significant advance in the field. More specific examples that are problematic for *JCIM* are straightforward, retrospective QSAR or QSPR studies and routine applications of quantum mechanics with little justification through contact with related experimental studies or conceptual debates. Rising problems are (i) reports of virtual screening exercises that result in proposal of potentially active compounds without any subsequent experimental validation and (ii) retrospective computational studies of structure–activity data that do not provide significant novel insights and testable hypotheses. *JCIM* and the *Journal of Medicinal Chemistry* share common philosophy. The recent Editorial in *J. Med. Chem.* should be consulted for further information [Stahl, M; Bajorath, J. *J. Med. Chem.* **2011**, *54*, 1–2].

### SOME TIPS TO AUTHORS

**Cover Letter.** Submission of a manuscript is a significant scholarly event that should be treated with care and dignity. Most authors recognize this and do everything right. However, some typical mistakes can be noted. Personally, I have always written a formal cover letter that is properly addressed to the Editor of the

journal. In it, I describe the context of the submission and why the work is novel and appropriate for the journal. Remarkably, I receive “cover letters” with little more than “Dear Editor, I am submitting this paper to your journal.” Even more remarkably, I sometimes receive “cover letters” that are addressed to an Editor of a different journal and/or that say that the submission is being made to a different journal. The obvious conclusion is that the paper has been rejected already by at least one other journal.

**Suggested Reviewers.** It is important to suggest at least three or four possible objective, knowledgeable reviewers. Such suggestions are much appreciated by Editors, and they are often followed. It is not helpful to suggest people, who, though knowledgeable, are unlikely to accept the request for a review, e.g., the latest Nobel laureate, a university president, or Editors of major journals. People with whom one frequently collaborates are also not helpful suggestions.

**Formatting.** Another way to get off to a bad start is to not format the submission for *JCIM*. *JCIM* basically follows normal ACS formatting with the addition of article titles in the references. It is an easy matter to look at a recent paper from *JCIM* and make one's submission look identical to it in format. When I prepare a manuscript for a journal, this is what I do down to the last detail such as capitalization in table and figure headings. There is no reason to not make submissions in the 100% correct format. Formatting a paper for another journal and submitting it to *JCIM* also suggests that it has likely been rejected elsewhere. Anything that distracts Editors and reviewers from focusing on the important content of a submission is not beneficial to the author.

**Content and Style.** Obviously, it is important for the manuscript to be written in a clear and logical manner and to report significant new results. It is also important to provide adequate context including appropriate citations to earlier related work. Excessive self-citation is improper. There are stylistic issues too; I personally avoid the following: (a) use of the first person, (b) use of the future tense, (c) use of the same words close together, (d) jargon, (e) “noun speak”, e.g., “computed 6-31G(d) hydrogen bond energy profiles”, (f) repetition (being concise is good), (g) anthropomorphisms, e.g., “Gaussian03 predicted”, (h) empty words, e.g., “high-level ab initio calculations” (everyone's calculations seem to be high-level), (i) very long sentences and very short paragraphs, and (j) figures that when reduced to journal size become illegible.

Overall, *JCIM* is healthy and prospering owing to your contributions and support. This includes your great efforts as authors and as conscientious reviewers. The goal is to continue to work together to provide the best venue for the most important publications in the realms of chemical information and modeling. Suggestions on how to improve *JCIM* including its Web site are always welcome.

Sincerely,

William L. Jorgensen  
Editor

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