

Plenary meeting

Euroforum Infantes, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain

19 August, 19:00-20:00, Auditorio02; 21 August 11:00-13:00, Auditorio02

CHAIR: Gernot Kostorz

Attendees: all Editors and Co-editors

IUCr staff attending: Nicola Ashcroft, Jill Bradshaw, Sean Conway, David Hoare, Gillian Holmes, Louise Jones, Peter Strickland, Tony Weight

1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Gernot Kostorz opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking everyone for attending and for their work on the journals.

1.1. WELCOME AND PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

Peter Strickland outlined the general arrangements for the meeting.

1.2. INTRODUCTIONS

All attendees were asked to stand up and introduce themselves to everybody, saying a few words on what they enjoyed about working on the journals and why they chose to accept to become Co-editors.

1.3. SCIENTIFIC EDITING - PUBLISHING A GOOD JOURNAL AND THE WORK INVOLVED

Gernot Kostorz described the work involved in scientific editing. He began by describing the publishing activities of the IUCr journals, highlighting that approximately 7000 articles were published last year, the majority in Acta E. Other topics covered included the impact factor of the journals, citations and research integrity. The duties and responsibilities of Co-editors were also highlighted, and problem areas to look out for such as plagiarism and fabrication of data were covered.

2. CHESTER REPORT

Gernot Kostorz ran through the Chester report and asked for questions on the information provided in report and also on any other aspects of the IUCr publishing operations.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM INDIVIDUAL JOURNAL MEETINGS

Matters arising from individual journal meetings were reported.

Walter Steurer suggested that the scope of Acta A should be extended, and perhaps that the journal should have the subtitle of 'Frontiers of Crystallography' or 'Advances in Crystallography' rather than the current 'Foundations of Crystallography'. The scope should be extended to include areas such as photonic crystals and multiferroics, and Co-editors should be sought to cover these topics and review articles invited.

Carol Brock announced that the new Section Editor for Acta B would be Sander van Smaalen, who would be a strong editor for modulated and incommensurate structures, phase transitions and electron density studies. There are concerns about the decline in the number of molecular structures published in Acta B, and the loss of papers to competitors such as Crystal Growth and Design that have higher impact factors. The question of how to make Acta B more attractive to authors had been discussed. Crystallographers are not in general self-promoting but they must make their case. It was questioned whether there would be an overlap with the revised scope of Acta A, but Walter Steurer replied that he did not think so but there should be discussions on which areas go in which journals.

Sandy Blake reported that the meeting for Acta C was based around the induction of new Co-editors, the challenges for the journal, and quality standards. One issue arising was the difficulty in finding suitable reviewers. It was questioned as to whether the standards applied to Acta C papers are accepted in the field; Sandy replied that if standards are lowered the journal will receive less reliable papers and that the current standards are high but justified.

Ted Baker summarised the combined Acta D and Acta F meeting. There were two main points: (i) For structural papers D and F are the only journals requiring validation, so are ahead of the field; however, they would like to go one step further and give reviewers access to coordinates and experimental data, so would like to discuss this with the Protein Data Bank. (ii) D and F would like to give the reviewers access to the reports of the other reviewers as it is good for reviewers to see other opinions. There are two places where this could be done: when the revised article is sent back for a final check, or when the final decision on the paper is made. This could also be a policy adopted by other IUCr journals.

Howard Einspahr added, for Acta F, that the idea of a more skeletonized format for structural papers had been well supported and would help to publish papers more rapidly. This will be worked towards in the next triennium in order to formulate a more Acta-E-like publication.

Jim Simpson, reporting on the Acta E meeting, discussed the common problems associated with the submission of a large number of papers, and expressed concern at the level of quality of some articles. Education to improve submissions is required for some authors. The journal was thought to be performing well on the whole, even though there have been some difficulties such as the fraud cases discovered earlier in the year. Also, open access does not seem to have put people off publishing in Acta E.

Andrew Allen, commenting on the JAC meeting, said that the journal has a very broad remit and a wide range of papers. Occasionally there are issues, such as with Computer Program papers, where authors need to read the Notes for Authors and keep to the guidelines for that type of paper. Finding reviewers is becoming more of a problem. He questioned whether we could make it a requirement for a submitting author to list five possible reviewers. It was also suggested that, for the International Year of Crystallography in 2013, perhaps selected papers could be made open access. Peter Strickland added that Co-editors could be reminded when an article has been with a reviewer for some time; an email could be sent automatically to the Co-editor. Reviewer anonymity was also brought up as it is important to make sure that reviewers are anonymous. At the moment, for Co-editors who use the submission system, the IUCr makes all attachment files anonymous, but this can occasionally fail. In cases where there is a failure, the submission system will be modified to give a warning to Co-editors.

Ake Kvick reviewed the JSR meeting. The next three years will show the emergence of papers on free-electron lasers (FELs) so the journal should be active in attracting these papers. In the near future there is expected to be an increased number of submissions from China so finding a new Co-editor from mainland China to filter out these papers is a priority. It is expected that the new category of beamline papers will be good for the impact factor and good for the beamline scientists; the IUCr should contact all beamline managers to encourage and invite submissions. It was also mentioned that it is becoming more difficult to find reviewers for a paper, and that the publishing special issues in JSR continues.

Gernot suggested that all journals might look for Co-editors in mainland China. He also mentioned the problems of finding reviewers and wondered whether we could reward reviewers or give them some kind of recognition. Peter added that we now have a database of all the reviewers that have worked with us since the new submission system was set up, and perhaps we could give them an electronic reprint of the papers they have worked on or send out New Year's greetings, for example.

4. TERMS OF OFFICE

The terms of office for editors were highlighted and it was considered that apart from special circumstances the nine-year period of office was appropriate.

5. TALK ON FRAUD

Jim Simpson gave a summary of the problems with fraud in Acta E and the various strategies that have been used to identify problem structures. Jim's slides, along with those from other presentations at the meeting, will be available from a link in editors' home pages.

The punishment for the authors of the fraudulent Acta E papers was raised. A number of authors have been banned and mechanisms exist to check all submissions for the banned authors. It was pointed out that if a Co-editor suspects fraud they should not accuse the authors but pass the case on to a Section Editor.

6. NEW JOURNALS

6.1. PROCEEDINGS JOURNAL

An outline is given in APPENDIX 2 of the Agenda Notes for the proposal of a proceedings journal which would cover large proceedings that might have been published in IUCr Journals such as those of the SAS and XAFS meetings. Generally proceedings are difficult to produce, with a large workload for Chester staff and also for Co-editors. Comments on the proposal from the attendees were requested, and the question was asked as to whether the IUCr should get involved with publishing such proceedings. It was mentioned that the impact factor is generally low for such journals, and not many original or good papers are submitted. In view of these remarks it was questioned why we were thinking of publishing a proceedings journal, and Gernot replied that the idea has been put forward to get views on whether such a journal is necessary as a service to the community. Andrew Allen thought it made sense for the IUCr to cover conferences. Jim Kaduk, having experience of the Denver Conferences, commented that it was becoming more and more difficult to get authors to contribute to such journals. It was also mentioned that a proceedings journal would not affect special issues, where 10-15 selected papers are published from a conference, which will remain in the individual journals.

6.2. OPEN-ACCESS JOURNALS

An outline is given in APPENDIX 3 of the Agenda Notes for the proposal of an open-access journal covering crystallography as a whole. This is in response to a number of larger publishers starting open-access peer-reviewed journals covering a wide subject area. For example, the Public Library of Science has launched PLoS ONE, covering all disciplines within science and medicine; the Nature Publishing Group launched Scientific Reports in June 2011, which covers biology, chemistry, the earth sciences and physics; and the American Physical Society will launch Physical Review X in autumn 2011, which will cover all fields of physics. These may overlap with, and be competition for, IUCr journals so we must investigate quite quickly so we do not lose ground. It was noted that the Executive Committee have commissioned a review into the future of IUCr Journals that includes the issue of open access. A decision on a new open-access journal, or possibly a new open-access section of a journal, e.g. Acta Cryst. A, would need to be delayed until the review had been completed.

7. GENERAL POLICY MATTERS

7.1. ARTICLE TRANSFER

The process of transferring a paper from one IUCr journal to another was highlighted. The authors should have the final say about transferring a paper. Co-editors should reject poor papers rather than suggesting a transfer to another journal.

7.2. REVIEW BOARDS

A review board (a set of reviewers who agree to handle a defined number of papers per year for a journal) has been in place for Section F for over a year. This has shown to be working well and might be a way forward for other journals.

7.3. PUBLICATION ETHICS

Publication ethics have been discussed at the last three Commission meetings; Ted Baker is currently acting as ethics adviser to the Commission. The general feeling was that there are no current problems and we do not need to change the guidelines at the moment.

7.4. CITATIONS IN SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

An Editorial on the problem of undercounting of citations that are published only in supplementary material was published in Section D, Section F and JAC. Manfred Weiss commented that another journal, Science, was changing its procedures and that he would check up on this.

7.5. MICROFILM ARCHIVE

There were no comments on this subject.

8. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Recent and future developments in Chester are outlined in APPENDIX 1 of the agenda notes. There were no further comments on this subject.

9. COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN CO-EDITORS

The IUCr has recently set up a number of online discussion forums. The question was asked whether such forums would be useful for communications within individual journals. If such forums are to be set up then volunteers would be needed to help manage the forums. It was suggested that each section Editor would need to decide on this and organise the running of their journal's forum.

10. JOURNALS PROMOTION

It was announced that Andrea Sharpe, the IUCr Promotions Officer, would be available on the IUCr stand at the Congress to talk about promotion of the journals. The budget for promoting the journals was currently about USD 50000 per annum. The question was asked whether we should have more advertising in the journals. There were no further comments on this subject.

11. ISSUES RAISED BY EDITORS AND CO-EDITORS

No additional issues were raised.

12. MATTERS FOR THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND THE OPEN COMMISSION MEETINGS

Co-editors were reminded that the Open Commission Meeting was to be held at lunchtime on 23 August.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no comments on this item.

14. DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The next formal meeting of the Commission on Journals will be held in conjunction with the 2014 IUCr Congress, which is to be held in Montreal, Canada. It is expected that the Commission will meet informally during 2012 and 2013 to coincide with at least one of the meetings of the IUCr regional associates.