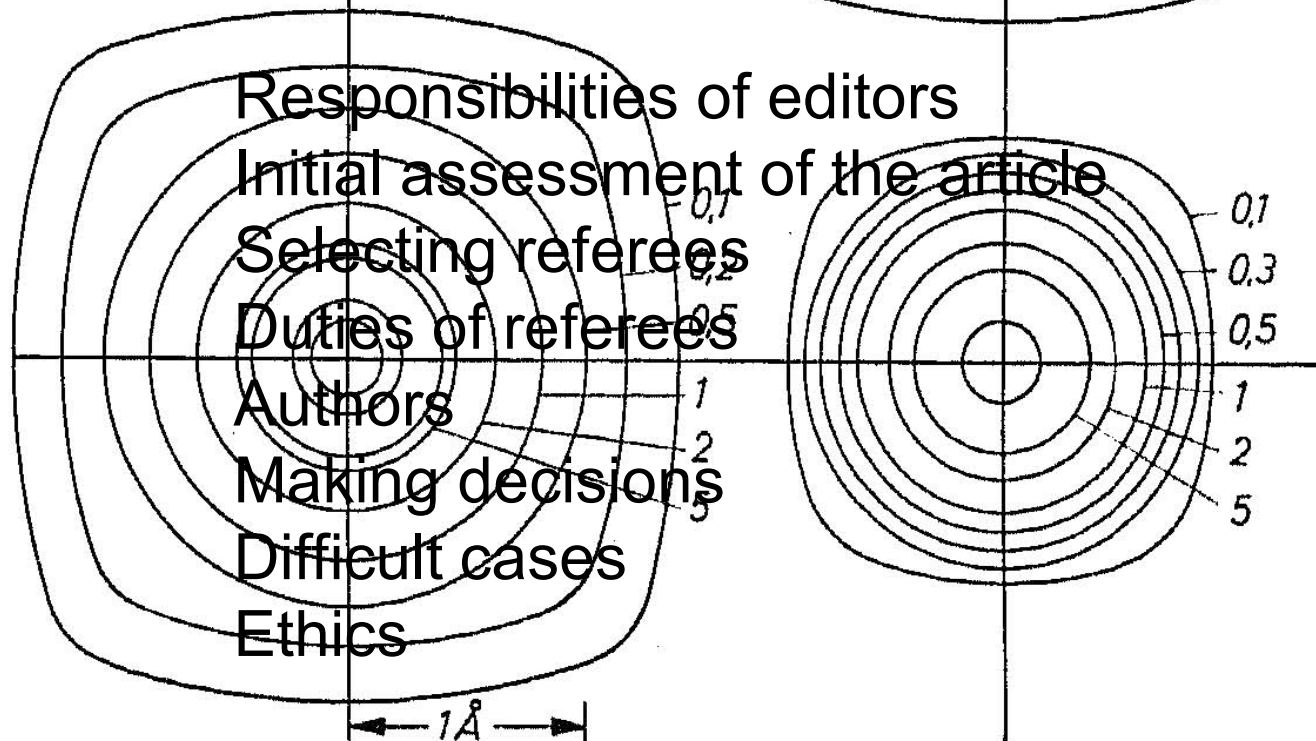




# Handling of submissions Experiences

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# Responsibilities of editors

Ensuring good scientific level of journal:

- look for submission promising high impact factor?
- judgement of article depends on choice of referees
- comprehension of editor ↔ confidence in referees
- judgement depends on values of editor
- courage to accept or reject

Reasonable time for refereeing:

- difficulty of finding referee for difficult work
- change referee will result in another 3-week delay
- editor doubling as referee?

Deadlines for revision:

- ask authors to inform you and explain delays

Misconduct amongst authors and reviewers:

- may a critical referee report be a personal attack ?
- decision depends on opinion of small group of specialists?

Rewriting a paper for an author (you are not expected to do this):

- if the author definitely does not have the means?
- experiences with having been nice ...

## Initial assessment of the article

When the paper first arrives:

- for first impression of suitability of work for my journal:
  - I start with reading abstract, introduction, conclusions
  - who is thanked, who is cited?
- when definitely not suitable for my journal: tell author
- when unsure about suitability, ask referees
- if judged suitable, choose referees and read work completely

Paper is incomplete and/or poorly written:

- impossible to send to referees
  - ask for revision of manuscript,
  - but author may be incapable to improve it ††
- demand that author adhere to Notes for Authors: at least in revision

Manuscript may be more suitable in different IUCr journal:

- contact author and relevant editor
  - if agreement transfer, otherwise decide to propose withdrawal
- similarly if referee reports available; send reports to the other editor

## Selecting referees

Methods for selecting referees:

- by experience, being aware of crystallographic literature  
has the person served me well earlier?
- from literature references, not connected to, or thanked by, authors
- search IUCr journals, World Directory of Crystallographers
- search Google Scholar, Scirus, (Pubmed)

Easy to search for name of person,  
much more difficult to search for science keywords

Authors suggestions for referees:

I consider these. I may choose one of them, but only one.

What if the author suggests exactly the referees I would have asked anyway?

# Duties of Referees

What is expected of referees:

- read the manuscript thoroughly
- *sine ira et studio* (no insults, no hedging)
- suggest improvements, help authors
  - originality, consistency, logic, conciseness, references ...
  - at refereeing stage, I do not insist on requirements of Notes for Authors
- editor's opinion should not influence referee's opinion
  - But: if the editor has critical questions on the contents of a manuscript, should he communicate these to the referees and thus guide them?  
maybe occasionally ...
- I find grading of papers (1=low, 5=high) of little use, no standard scale

Deadlines:

- depending on difficulty of manuscript and of finding referees, I may not insist on deadlines; changing referee implies also a delay

Keep **identity** of referees **confidential!**

- use the journal's on-line system, or prepare your own files with the reports

**Explain** editor's **decision** to referee, in particular if contrary to recommendation

# Respecting authors

Caring for authors?

- we wish to attract good authors, must be at author's service
  - But: this is more time consuming with questionable papers ...
- many modern journals are "no-frill" efficient and impersonal
  - But: being an editor who cares is time-consuming
- if referee reports are late: explain reasons to authors

Explain your negative decisions to authors!

- do not answer insults with insults
  - discontented authors may appeal to the Section Editor
  - and then to the Editor in Chief
- appeals: obtain reasons for co-editors decision, ask new referees

Dangerous relations:

- an author whose paper you rejected asks you to become his facebook friend
- an author whose paper you rejected sends you photos of family and kids
  - invites you to visit his place ...

# Making decisions

A co-editor's decision is always subjective (courageous) to a certain degree

- borderline of "some merit" ↔ "inacceptable" is fuzzy

  - use **all** information you can get hold of

- supplementary information ← referee reports from submission elsewhere

- are the referee reports useful, clear; what is my **own** opinion?

- are the author's revisions acceptable (they are sometimes disappointing)

- if I feel capable in the subject matter, I also act as referee in case of missing or unsatisfactory referee report. But: I always disclose my identity

- some co-editors ask advice of section editor when unsure

Acknowledgements:

- to unknown referee **why not**, to co-editor **better not**

Withdraw: author does not respond, revision takes too long

- I may also propose withdrawal to author (it is nicer than rejection)

## Some difficult cases

- 1 Retraction:  
Readers alert section editor of blatant mistake in a publication. The paper had been accepted with two favourable referee reports, co-editor's approval. Therefore, section editor did not stop the proofs inspite of misgivings. Section editor was wrong. **Pay attention to your misgivings.**
- 2 *Y* complains about having not been adequately cited by authors *B*.  
*Y* submits Letter to the Editor in no uncertain terms.  
Section editor negotiates peace between *B* and *Y*, no new referees.  
*Y*'s Letter is published in a softened version; *B* answers with another Letter.
- 3 Letter to the Editor by *B*: Math in paper by *A* is not applicabe to problem.  
Peace negotiations by Section Editor fail. *B* modifies his letter 4 times.  
A new referee makes valuable suggestions, *B* revises his letter superficially.  
Letter of *B* and answering Letter by *A* published.  
Section Editor knows *A* very well; he also sympathizes with *B*. **Take care!**
- 4 Author of substandard manuscript pleads for help. Great effort of section editor to help. Rejection shocks author, tears and pleas. **Do not help!**

# Ethics

Plagiarism:

- Fabricating a paper from fraudulent evidence, or with copy-paste, does not seem to be easy for "Foundations of Crystallography".
- Auto-plagiarism may be a problem anywhere.
- Authors who did not contribute to the paper may be frequently found.

## High impact factor of Acta A

The high impact factor of Acta A attracts manuscripts from authors who do not know much crystallography.

Even though I should like to compete with *Phys. Rev.*, I do not think that we can cater to solid state physics, e.g. heavy fermions, etc.

Our domain is: diffraction physics, molecular structures and crystal properties in condensed matter physics; theory of structure determination methods.

High impact factor of Acta A also attracts papers suitable for another IUCr journal: when faced with proposition, authors ask for time to reach decision, probably submit somewhere else without withdrawing from Acta A.