

Journals Management Board meeting

Chester, UK, 16-17 March 2023

Chair: Andrew Allen

Attendees: Andrew Allen (IUCr Editor-in-chief), Simon Billinge (*Acta A*), Sandy Blake (*Acta B*), Hanna Dabkowska (IUCr President), Elspeth Garman (*Acta D*), Janos Hajdu (*JAC*), Bill Harrison (*IUCrData*), Loes Kroon-Batenburg (*IUCrData*), Kristina Kvashnina (*JSR*), Sean Parkin (*Acta E*), Thomas Proffen (Commissioning Editor), Mark van Raaij (*Acta F*), Paul Raithby (*Acta C*), Randy Read (*Acta D*)

Chester staff: Nicola Ashcroft, Amanda Berry, Sean Conway, Simon Glynn, Gillian Holmes, Mike Hoyland, Louise Jones, Ed Morgan, Andrea Sharpe, Lisa Stephenson, Alex Stanley, Peter Strickland, Tony Weight, Simon Westrip, Michele Zema

JOURNAL ACTION PLANS

Journal action plan – *Acta A*

- Aim to improve the quality, increase the number of submissions and improve the impact of the journal.
- Previously, there has been a mismatch between aspirations and resources – revise plan so it is executable with current resources.
- Commission short (4-5 pages) ‘best practice’ or ‘how to’ articles from high-level authors. These should be in areas the journal wants to encourage submissions from. A template would be provided to the author. These articles will hopefully help increase the impact factor as well as defining the scope of the journal.
- Relevance to structural science is a challenge regarding the quality of submissions as some papers tend to be very mathematical. Trying to get authors to add details of a paper's context at a later stage has failed. Articles should be assessed in terms of scholarship, relevance, novelty and correctness. A pre-screening stage will be introduced into the submission process with articles judged on their scholarliness and relevance. Authors will get either a standard rejection letter or will be told that resubmission would be welcome after certain issues have been addressed. New text has already been worked on for the web page, *Notes for Authors* etc.
- A computational methods section will be introduced. Papers in different sections might be labelled by topic. It is hoped that this will help to attract papers.
- Work will be carried out to reduce review times.
- Assemble a virtual collection of articles on machine learning/AI in time for the Congress.

Journal action plan – *Acta B*

- Two of the Section Editors need to be replaced. Their successors need to be identified and appointed (there will be some overlap between the new appointments and the Section Editors stepping down). These appointments are important for the future direction of the journal.
- *Acta B* has found that special issues are more successful than individually commissioned articles and it is easier to attract papers. A successful special issue on non-ambient crystallography was published about 10 years ago and it might be time to revisit this area.
- There has been a good response to commentaries, so it is proposed to publish more of these.
- A new section on crystal growth was introduced recently. The Co-editors appointed to handle these papers will be asked to identify potential authors and to write papers themselves.

- Ways of reducing publication times, in particular for the small proportion of papers that get stuck at some point in the review process, will be explored.

Journal action plan – Acta C

- There are currently five Section Editors, two of whom will be retiring at Congress. There has been an overlap of about a year.
- The biggest challenge for the journal is increasing the number of submissions.
- Possible new sections are being explored, with quantum crystallography identified as a new area. A special issue in this area would be a good start.
- Working with Sandy Blake, Paul Raithby is reviewing the topics that define the scope of *Acta B* and *C*. A graphical scope will be produced for *Acta C*.
- Three new members have been appointed to the review panel, which now numbers 56.
- Pre-screening of submissions will be considered. This would be particularly relevant if new sections are introduced to ensure that articles are handled by appropriate Co-editors.
- Other options for new areas to cover will be explored, starting with the computational studies.

Journal action plan – Acta D

- The number of submissions is key – currently the trend is in the wrong direction. Channels of communication with the Commissioning Editor will be opened.
- An editorial board meeting is being held soon. Members will be asked to come up with ideas for articles that could be commissioned and also to be ambassadors for the journal. The board needs to be refreshed and possible candidates are being identified.
- The review process needs to be speeded up. Co-editors will be advised of best practice. Work at the editorial office to identify where bottlenecks occur is welcome.

Journal action plan – Acta E

- This year the journal will receive its first impact factor since 2012 and it is expected that the number of submissions will increase considerably as a result, particularly from China. Co-editor candidates have been identified and new members of the board should be in place by Congress. The need to be able to turn papers around swiftly will be emphasised when candidates are approached as it is important to keep publication times at the traditional one month level. New guidelines will be produced for reviewing the type of papers currently being published. New appointees will be mentored. An editorial board meeting will be held once the appointments have been made. The need for a rapid turnover will be stressed to the Co-editors as we wish to get publication times back down to a month.
- The Section Editors wish to continue to strengthen the journal's teaching role. Papers are currently being published for a special issue that will should be completed in the summer. The Section Editors will work with Michele Zema to see if any teaching material developed for outreach work can be published in the journal. The papers are of a practical nature and so distinct from those published in *JAC*. A teaching paper on quantum crystallography has been suggested along the lines of 'how do you actually do it and what does it tell you above a normal refinement?' and another on incommensurate structures.
- Several special issues are in the pipeline or being explored. It is expected that a number of papers from the

AfCA initiative will be published in *Acta E*, strengthening ties with the IUCr outreach programme. Joe Reibenspies (an *Acta E* Co-editor) and Peter Corfield are organising a session at the Baltimore ACA meeting on 'Exploring intermolecular forces and interactions' and have proposed a special issue across *Acta C* and *E*. IUCr Journals are sponsoring the session and the invited student speaker will be given an open-access voucher to publish a paper in *Acta E*. Collaboration between *Acta C* and *E* will be increased, not least by working on joint special issues.

- The journal wishes to become the natural home for simple powder diffraction studies. A powder expert will be recruited as a Co-editor and a special issue will be explored.
- Ways of getting more submissions of mineralogical and geological structures could be explored - the International Year of Mineralogy might offer opportunities.

Journal action plan – *Acta F*

- The main challenges are to increase the number of submissions and to ensure the journal has an identity distinct from that of *Acta D*.
- In order to make the journal more distinct from *Acta D*, there will be a focus on short articles, and the editors will work to attract more short methods papers and reviews, expanding into more general scientific areas and reaching more young scientists. There could be a focus on sample preparation for all structural biology techniques, not just crystallization. Facilities papers (*e.g.* on crystallization, cryo-EM facilities) are also being solicited. The Section Editors will be more proactive in writing editorials.
- *Acta F* could have a role documenting unpublished PDB entries. publBio could be used to prepare papers for prospective authors, especially those with access to open-access deals. Single-structure papers with little or no complementary data from other techniques are welcomed in *Acta F* while multi-structure articles that describe complementary experiments and discuss the underlying biology are better in *Acta D*.
- Some new Co-editors are needed. The Section Editors will reach out to the editorial board and involve them in ongoing discussions to determine future directions for the journal.

Journal action plan – *JAC*

- The overall aim is to increase impact and quality.
- Co-editors will be asked to identify interesting areas, and to talk to potential authors, encouraging them to submit.
- Work will be done to cut review times, perhaps by tweaking deadlines where appropriate for different stages of the review process.
- A special collection of previously published papers on machine learning will be put together. A guest editor has already been appointed. A joint special issue with *Acta A* (with commissioned papers) could also be explored.

Journal action plan – *JSR*

- The scope will be revised and new areas for the journal to cover will be identified.
- Templates will be provided for authors for submissions.
- Authors will be given the opportunity to click a 'this is my first submission' button on submission. They will then be given extra help if necessary during the review process, and publication of the paper will be celebrated on social media.

- Work will be undertaken to reduce review times and improve the chasing procedures. The review invitation will be changed to ask the potential reviewer to confirm that they can carry out the review within a certain period.
- Some new Co-editors will be appointed from different synchrotrons (e.g. Diamond, Sirius, SESAME). A Co-editor meeting is planned to explore their experiences, good and bad, with the journal, and to get them involved in initiating special issues and commissioning papers.
- Interactivity on social media will be improved.

Journal action plan – *IUCrData*

- The future direction of *IUCrData* needs to be determined. By the Calgary Congress, there will need to be Main and Co-editor appointments as the people appointed for the launch of the Data Reports section will have served a full term.
- The Raw Data Letters section is off to a good start but more papers are needed, not least to improve the author tools that are being developed. Congress offers a good opportunity to promote the new section. Co-editors are in place to handle submissions in the areas the section wants to cover, e.g. powder and high-pressure studies.
- Further new sections need to be identified going forward, as well as how lessons learnt from *IUCrData* can be integrated into the other journals.
- Need to look into getting *IUCrData* indexed by Clarivate.

Journal action plan – *IUCrJ*

- Need to refresh editorial board. Three out of seven Main Editors are due to retire. A slight change in direction might result after their replacements have been appointed.
- Measures to speed up publication will be explored.
- New subject areas for coverage should be identified.
- Richard Catlow is exploring commissioning a small number of high-level articles in crystal structure prediction. Further small, very select, high-level special issues could be considered (these might be precursors for special issues in other journals).
- Plans need to be made to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the journal.

Action items (in addition to those in journal action plans)

- Main Editors need to review journal scopes in time for Congress.
- *Acta C* and *E*: reply to Joe Reibenspies and Peter Corfield about proposal for special issue.
- Main Editors: be proactive in discussing items raised at the meeting with other Main Editors of your journal.
- Send draft reviewer guidelines to Main Editors for feedback.
- Explore options for including article titles in references.
- Investigate the possibility of multiple covers and making high-resolution covers more available.
- Commissioning Editors – Andrew Allen to work to clarify and communicate their role.
- Explore idea of putting journal-specific post-it notes on posters at meetings to solicit submissions in that area.
- Identify potential *JSR* Co-editors – Michele to suggest potential candidates at SESAME.

- Ask members of editorial boards about Congress attendance.
- Look at methods to make sure that referees read the supplementary material and review it along with the body of the paper.
- Develop tools to help authors decide where to submit, perhaps based on the abstract and/or keywords.
- Look into providing a web page where the scopes of all the journals are given.
- Explore possibilities for an online shop and a stall at Congress selling IUCr merchandise. The editors were enthusiastic about this and reported strong sales at other meetings.
- Design slides to be shown at the end of talks at meetings.
- Look into adding tick boxes to the IUCr journals' search results pages, to allow researchers to download batches of references in a format of their choice for adding to a bibliography.