

ACQUAL Volume 15

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Dear Reader,

Welcome to the first issue of volume 15 of *Accreditation and Quality Assurance* (ACQUAL)! The editors hope you will find the collection of articles exciting and informative, reflecting ACQUAL's broad scope as characterized by keywords such as accreditation, metrological traceability, measurement uncertainty, reliability, compliance and clinical chemistry.

The editors' sincere thanks go to the authors for choosing ACQUAL to publish their results, and not less to the reviewers whose expertise and engagement in many instances help improving argumentation and presentation of the articles. And ACQUAL wouldn't exist the past 14 years without the continued interest of its readers. During the recent years, the number of full-text downloads grew steadily—not including the drastic increase that occurred when the earlier non-digitalized volumes were scanned and became available on the internet. Yet in 2009 the number of downloads increased by another 20% in comparison to 2008 (for the period January to September).

Last year's volume started with an expanded and reformulated mission statement "Aims and Scope" that made clear that ACQUAL not only serves the traditional sectors introducing metrological principles in chemical measurement, but also clinical chemistry, laboratory medicine and microbiology. This trend was proven by the number of submissions during the year.

"Aims and Scope" is part of the journal's website [1] whose eye-catching front page highlights reasons for publishing in ACQUAL when aspects of measurement science are involved relevant for the quality of chemical measurements. Among the most eminent concepts used in ACQUAL's articles—see this issue—are 'measurement uncertainty' and 'metrological traceability', essential paradigm of VIM [2] and GUM [3], as well as 'accreditation' as a provision to ensure confidence in measurement results. The results of a comparison with other journals, graphically displayed on the website's front page, clearly indicate that for these terms and some more code words, ACQUAL is indeed *the* leading journal.

The wide scope of ACQUAL—whether in terms of application fields or in view of the span from statistical tools to skillful practice, strengthened by the geographic distribution of the "intercontinental" Board—underlines the ultimate necessity of a common scientific language in concepts and terms, formal presentation and diction to facilitate communication, i.e. to contribute to the elimination of conceptual barriers to understanding (CBU) as quoted in "Aims and Scope". It is for that reason that the authors are requested to comply with VIM and GUM as well as with ACQUAL's Tutorials and "Compulsory Conventions" [1], based on the SI brochure and the IUPAC Green Book. Looking at the articles being published in 2009, the convergence towards common presentation standards cannot be denied. This is contrasted by the stupefying variety of notations being used in individual laboratories, whether as a consequence of culture, tradition, specialization, etc.—or of creativity, a virtue expected from every scientist. For publications in ACQUAL a few old notations are retained, mostly for technical reasons as well as to avoid unreasonable friction and overregulation. Sometimes author, reviewer and editor must find a

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compromise between the presently stipulated format and the one in use when the reported work was conceived.

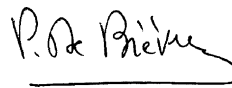
Another aspect of variability are the idioms of our *lingua franca* because the majority of the authors are not native English speakers. And in many instances it is difficult to find a native speaker, who is able and prepared to convert poor English into clear English. Unless the rescuer is an expert in the field, such a job tends to be much tougher and more time consuming than a plain translation. Now and then a reviewer provides a helping hand, in particular if s/he wants to see the paper published. Such an offer is noted as an extremely generous exception given the fact that most reviewers devote their very limited spare time to a reviewing process.

What Springer offers in this context is a language editing service during production, i.e. after a manuscript has been accepted for publication. This service sees to orthographic and grammatical correctness and to basic style; however, it never can rectify what is incomprehensible or ambiguous for a reader. Hence the editor must decide himself whether the language level is acceptable for ACQUAL's readers or whether the manuscript has to be returned to the author. Our community includes linguistically ambitious scholars as well as colleagues less trained in the foreign language—so what actually is 'acceptable'? Is a paper publishable if a reviewer advocates the metrological content but requests a "thorough language editing"? Whether simple or elaborate diction, or the text being speckled with features typical of the authors' mother tongue, the editors must trust that in the end all articles in ACQUAL are well understood.

ACQUAL has always been intending to serve practitioners' needs and interests. The section "Practitioners Reports" underpins this aim with articles that present aspects such as competent applications of metrological concepts and solving measurement problems, with emphasis on skill and originality. This is in contrast to "General Papers" of which the reader would expect new scientific ideas or insights, fundamental approaches or theories. Among the Practitioners' Reports one finds contributions of far reaching importance such as the

presentation of the results of CCQM Pilot Studies (see this issue for an example). The Web of Knowledge [4], from whose files the data of impact factor, citation index and h factor are taken, rates contributions to both the sections equally. Still there is a certain preference of the label 'General Paper' by the authors as if granting higher reputation. From the editors' point of view, the distinction is a structuring element to provide the reader with a better overview of what the journal is offering.

With the editor's letter informing the author that his manuscript has been accepted for publication, a process commences which starts with the copyright transfer. It does not only include the formal editing of the manuscript with references, figures, tables and possibly Electronic Supplementary Material [1], according to the journal's layout, but also all the technical preparations necessary for online availability, abstracting services, proofs and printing. The period of time for this complex workflow has recently been compressed to less than a fortnight: many thanks to all who worked on this! It definitely contributes to the truthness of the assertion "Rapid Publication" on ACQUAL's website.



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Editors-in-Chief

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