

COMMENTARY

State of the Journal

The triennial ISSOL meeting provides an opportunity for the OLEB Editorial Board to meet and discuss the current state of the Journal. I prepared a summary of developments in the previous three years to share not only with the Editorial Board in Orleans and attenders at the ISSOL business meeting but also with the readers of the Journal.

Journal Quality

I believe that my most important function is to see that high quality science is printed in OLEB. I measure this by the percentage of papers submitted that are eventually published and by the Impact Factor. The percentage of papers published, not including special issues that I did not edit, was 59 out of 122 or 48%. This is about 5% lower than the past six years but is probably within the error limits of such a determination.

The Impact Factor is one measure of quality used by the Science Citation Index and is the frequency with which articles published in OLEB are cited within the two year period after they were published. For example the IF for 1996 is:

$$\text{IF} = \frac{\text{Number of literature citations in 1996 to OLEB papers published in 1994 - 1995}}{\text{Number of papers published in OLEB in 1994 - 1995}}$$

The average IF for the past ten years is 1.02 which places OLEB in the 68th percentile. This means that 68% of the journals surveyed by Science Citation Index have lower impact factors (they are cited less than OLEB). I believe this to be a good rating considering the relatively small community of scientists in this field. The smaller the number of scientists the smaller the number of papers published and the lower the impact factor.

There is a steady flux of articles to be considered for publication which makes it possible for the journal to be published in a timely fashion. We are regularly publishing about 30 papers a year in about 600 pages. It is clear that OLEB is the principal journal for publication of papers dealing with the broad interdisciplinary topics of processes in the presolar nebula, planetary formation and atmospheric chemistry, the environment of the early Earth, the origin of life and the early evolution of life.

In addition to regular submissions, special issues are also published which deal with a particular topic or event. The following are in preparation:

1. 'Planetary and Interstellar Processes; Applications to the Origins of Life' edited by Douglas Whittet.

2. 'Mars: Early Environment and the Origins of Life' edited by Jack Farmer.
3. Commemorative Issue dedicated to the memory of Cyril Ponnampereuma edited by Raphael Navarro-Gonzalez.
4. Commemorative issue to celebrate the 70th birthday of Leslie Orgel.
5. An issue for full papers which describe science presented at ISSOL '96 in Orleans.

World Wide Web Page

OLEB now has a web page, courtesy of David Deamer, which can be reached at <http://helium.ucsc.edu/~deamer/origins.html>. There you will find tables of contents for recent issues of OLEB as well as a list of papers accepted for publication. Meeting notices and an origins of life discussion group can also be found there. Direct connections ('hot buttons') to other web pages dealing with the origins of life and related topics are also available. This page will continue to evolve, so send suggestions concerning it to David at deamer@chemistry.ucsc.edu.

Circulation and Finances

The decreasing number of institutional subscriptions of the journal continues to be a concern. This is due to the decreasing budgets of libraries so that they are cutting subscriptions and using interlibrary loan more frequently. The journals to be cut are determined from local usage. Here again we suffer because of the relatively small number of scientists doing research in this area. The decrease in institutional subscriptions has been offset, in part, by the increase in individual subscriptions. Because of the special 30% discount for individual subscriptions by ISSOL members it is necessary to have about four individual subscriptions for every institutional subscription that is lost.

ISSOL members will receive an application form for a subscription along with their annual ISSOL dues notices. You can pay for the subscription by credit card so you will not have to change currency to US dollars (or Dutch guilders). You are strongly urged to subscribe.

Comments concerning OLEB, both negative and positive, are always welcome as are suggestions for special issues, reviews or other material to be considered for publication. Your continued support of the ISSOL journal by publishing in it, subscribing to it and by citing recent papers in it, will be greatly appreciated.

James P. Ferris
Editor-in-Chief