

Editorial



Dear Readers,

What a year! For most of us, 2020 has been the worst year of our lives. The virus pandemic brought hardship, suffering and pain to millions of people all over the planet. In the name of all of us at SYNLETT let me say that our hearts go out to those in sorrow. In such times, it is rather challenging to express comforting words and spread optimism. How could we of all people alleviate suffering? It seems to be our nature as chemists that we tend to question our ability to contribute against global crises. In truth however, chemistry has frequently helped in times of crises, and there is a lot we can do. It only starts with donating hand sanitizers and protective masks and gloves to our communities. Yet, there is so much more, chemists can provide, infinitely more! I don't want to make this bigger as needed and I am not going to dwell on the roles of fertilizers and antibiotics to human well-being, but are we even aware of how chemical synthesis and catalysis has contributed against viral diseases? Did you actually know how the probably biggest pandemic of all times, the HIV crisis, is currently being controlled? Patients take three or four small molecule drugs, designed by medicinal chemists and manufactured by process chemists, that save the lives of millions of people. Similarly, hepatitis C, a disease that, for a long time, could not be cured, can now be treated in up to 99% of all cases with sophisticated designer drugs. Don't get me

wrong, I'm not trying to advocate small molecule antivirals against vaccination. There are many viral diseases that are effectively treated with vaccines and it may well be that COVID-19 is one of them. I certainly hope so! Like many of us, I was fascinated to see how incredibly fast scientists were able to develop the first corona virus vaccines. However, I have to disappoint you if you were to believe that vaccines are 'chemical free'. There is a lot of intelligent and creative chemical synthesis in vaccine design and manufacture! We at SYNLETT have decided that it is time to celebrate the amazing contributions of chemical synthesis and catalysis to the design and manufacture of antivirals with a cluster devoted to this topic that we will be publishing in 2021. Dirk Trauner was so kind in helping me edit this special effort.

Other topics of current interest, however, will not be forgotten and we have several exciting Clusters coming up next year. These are:

- [*Modern Heterocycle Synthesis and Functionalization*](#) (Tomislav Rovis, guest editor: Louis-Charles Campeau)
- [*The Power of Transition Metals - In Honor of Prof. Barry Trost and 20 Years SOS*](#) (guest editor: Gary Molander)
- [*Radicals - by Young Chinese Organic Chemists*](#) (Ang Li, guest editor: Chen Zhu)
- [*Nickel in Catalysis*](#) (Rubén Martín, guest editor: Gary Molander)
- [*Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence in Chemical Synthesis and Catalysis*](#) (Benjamin List, guest editor: Connor W. Coley)
- [*Perspectives on Organoheteroatom and Organometallic Chemistry*](#) (Ang Li, guest editor: Xuefeng Jiang)
- [*Design and Chemical Synthesis of Antivirals*](#) (Benjamin List, guest editor: Dirk Trauner)
- [*Special Section – 12th EuCheMS Organic Division Young Investigator Workshop*](#)
- [*Late-Stage Functionalization*](#) (Benjamin List, guest editor: Tobias Ritter)

Independent of the current crisis, we have used 2020 to work hard on further consolidating and advancing our journal. For example, we have published the following Clusters:

- [Conference Special Issue \(9th Pacific Symposium on Radical Chemistry\): Radical-Based Methods for C–H Functionalization](#) (David Nicewicz, guest editor: Corey Stephenson)
- [Biocatalysis](#) (Tomislav Rovis, guest editor: Todd Hyster)
- [Special Section – 11th EuChemS Organic Division Young Investigator Workshop](#)
- [Conference Special Issue \(International Symposium on Synthesis and Catalysis 2019 – ISySyCat2019\)](#) (guest editor: Anthony Burke)
- [Integrated Synthesis Using Continuous-Flow Technologies](#) (Yasuhiro Uozumi, guest editor: Shinichiro Fuse)

I also want to share with you the great news that Select Crowd Reviewing continues to grow here. Moreover, many other journals of different publishing houses, covering all types of science, are starting to use this exciting new approach to peer review. At SYNLETT, the majority of our manuscripts are now handled this way (figure published in *Synlett* **2020**, DOI: 10.1055/s-0040-1705955).

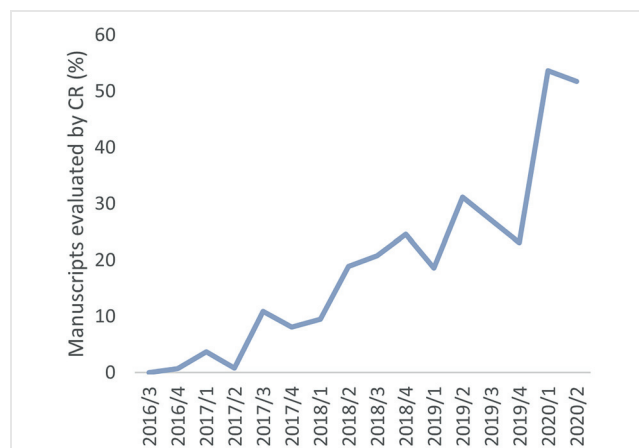


Figure 1 Development of Select Crowd Reviewing: increasing percentage of manuscripts evaluated by Select Crowd Reviewing relative to the overall number of manuscripts sent for external peer review.

Indeed, I am very grateful to our "crowd" for their commitment and enthusiasm in reviewing for us, and to our authors for embracing this new format, which delivers quality feedback with "warp-speed".

Last but not least, I would like to take this opportunity to thank associate editor Laurence Harwood. Laurence has been a member of our board since 2001 and served the journal in this role for 20 years. He has made many important contributions to our journal and I'm deeply grateful to him. Laurence has been not only the most vocal but also the hardest working member of our team and we will all miss him on our board for his unstoppable joke making! Fortunately, he will stay with us at the Thieme Chemical Journals in his role as the Editor-in-Chief of the open-access journal SynOpen. Thank you very much, Laurence!



Let me stop here and, on behalf of all associate editors and the editorial staff at Thieme in Stuttgart, thank our authors, readers, and referees for their excellent contributions and commitment to SYNLETT. Let us all continue to work together in 2021 to advance chemical synthesis and catalysis and, as good as we can, to improving life on earth.

I wish you all a healthy and prosperous New Year 2021.

Best wishes,

Benjamin List
Editor-in-Chief
Mülheim/Ruhr
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