

Turning one

Celebrating one year of publishing at *Communications Materials*

Communications Materials was established as a selective, open access journal, reporting important research in materials science. The key criteria we apply when selecting papers for publication is whether or not we expect other researchers working on the same topic will find a paper interesting. This simple editorial threshold has allowed us to publish papers in our first year that are generating significant interest.

In 2020 *Communications Materials* published 95 research papers across a range of topics. The majority of our papers are in highly-active areas of materials research, such as biomaterials, condensed matter, energy and structural materials, to name a few. We have also been encouraged by submissions in more niche topics, and by papers that seek to address the global push towards sustainability and public health. Our flexible editorial criteria — that we seek to publish papers that are ‘interesting’ to those working on the same topic — has also meant we have published all types of advances, including new fundamental understanding, technological achievements, material and device performance, methodologies, and important negative results. We are extremely proud of the papers we published in our first year.

Journal decision times are understandably a key concern for authors. In 2020 our average decision time was less than 7 days from submission for the initial decision of whether or not to send a paper for review, and less than 40 days from submission for the first round of review. Decision times will always be a key focus for us, tempered against the need to ensure

that papers have been thoroughly and fairly assessed. Indeed, author service has been at the heart of our handling of the approximately 350 submissions that we received in 2020.

As well as service to our authors, two key themes for *Communications Materials* are transparency in peer review and the support of Early Career Researchers. Authors can choose to publish a Peer Review file alongside their paper that contains journal decision letters, reviewer reports, and author reply letters. Encouragingly, just over half of our authors have opted-in to this. We were also delighted to introduce training grants for Early Career Researchers, which allowed our winners to participate in conferences that they would otherwise have not been able to. In deciding the winners of these awards we not only considered how much each candidate might benefit, but also placed an emphasis on ensuring the diversity of our winners. Increased attention is rightly being placed on the support of Early Career Researchers in the materials community, and we hope that these training grants go some way towards helping them at the start of their careers.

As the tagline of our first Editorial said, *Communications Materials* is “a collaboration with the materials community”.¹ This is best embodied by our editorial team, composed of in-house editors and an Editorial Board of academic editors. We believe this editorial model has several advantages. In particular, it combines a full-time editor’s knowledge of editorial processes with an active researcher’s subject expertise. Our Editorial Board is the heart and soul of the journal, and we are

extremely proud of the ten-person Board we have in place, in terms of their knowledge and expertise, as well as diverse representation. With support from the in-house team, they are already sending papers for review and accepting them for publication. We would sincerely like to thank them for the time and effort they generously give. Most striking for us has been the care and attention they pay to each paper they handle. It has been truly rewarding to work in collaboration with them. We will gradually grow the Editorial Board as the number and subject diversity of submissions increases, and please do get in touch if you are interested in joining our team.

A further initiative we introduced to foster collaboration with the research community is Reviewer of the month. Each month we select one referee whose report went above and beyond, such as the depth of analysis they gave, helpful feedback to authors that improves a paper, or an insightful report that gave the editors confidence that they were making a fair decision. We hope this award shows our appreciation, and we would like to sincerely thank the over 400 referees whose reports contributed to our decision making in 2020.

The biggest story of 2020 was of course the global pandemic. We certainly felt the effect of lockdowns at *Communications Materials*; for some of our authors it gave them the time needed to finish analyzing their data and writing up their papers, while for others it prevented them from completing their projects or collecting data requested by referees. For us editors we faced the same challenges that everyone has; adapting to new working environments and new ways of communicating with our colleagues. Materials science is a key scientific discipline that will help to see an end to the pandemic^{2,3} and we acknowledge and thank all those researchers who rapidly adjusted their research efforts to material-focused solutions that help to keep us all safe.

Finally, and most importantly, we would like to thank everyone that has contributed to our journal. To the authors that have trusted us with their research, the referees that have kindly given their time, the Editorial Board Members who have assessed papers, and you — the reader — for choosing to read our papers. Certainly there is no shortage of literature, and we sincerely hope that you enjoy reading our articles as much as we enjoy selecting and preparing them for publication. As we turn

the page on our first year, we look forward to writing the many chapters ahead for *Communications Materials*.

Published online: 04 February 2021

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