

Foreword: The Case of Measuring Marine Iron(III) Complexes

Graeme E. Batley^A

^A Centre for Environmental Contaminants Research, CSIRO Energy Technology, Bangor NSW 2234, Australia.
Email: graeme.batley@csiro.au

Manuscript received: 16 May 2005.

Final version: 16 May 2005.

Occasionally a paper comes along that challenges the past interpretations of experimental data. This will typically invoke a strong defence from those who feel their data are being challenged, and if these happen to be among those chosen to review the paper, the chances of the paper being recommended for publication are likely to be limited. The editor is not in a position to make such judgements and must clearly be guided by the referees' recommendations. There are often several ways to interpret experimental findings, and there is frequently a schism between researchers noted for a strong theoretical focus and those who are more strongly experimentalist.

In this case, the paper by Raewyn Town and Herman van Leeuwen^[1] challenged the past interpretations of adsorptive stripping voltammetric studies of iron complexation in seawater. Not surprisingly, this received a critical response from Stan van den Berg^[2] and Keith Hunter,^[3] both of whom had worked in the area, although other referees were less disparaging. Rejecting the paper seemed a rather extreme move, when on the face of it the theory seemed reasonable. Given that this material was likely to be presented in other forums (e.g. conferences), where the opportunity for scientific debate may be limited, it seemed highly appropriate to use this journal as the vehicle for this debate so that others might read the

criticisms and the authors' response and judge the merits of the paper for themselves.

This progressed with the editor asking the authors to address in their revised manuscript only those suggestions not germane to the scientific disagreements. Stan and Keith were asked to write up their criticisms in articles for publication. These were then sent to Raewyn and Herman, who were given a written right-of-reply.^[4] All of this would normally take place in the review/resubmission process facilitated by the editors. Here, the scientific dialogue is open.

The opportunity for robust scientific debate occurs too infrequently, and it was felt appropriate that, as a new journal, *Environmental Chemistry* might take the opportunity to foster rather than prevent such debate where the opportunity presented itself. The following papers are our first science offering in this arena.

References

- [1] R. M. Town, H. P. van Leeuwen, *Environ. Chem.* **2005**, 2, 80. doi:10.1071/EN05021
- [2] C. M. G. van den Berg, *Environ. Chem.* **2005**, 2, 88. doi:10.1071/EN05029
- [3] K. A. Hunter, *Environ. Chem.* **2005**, 2, 85. doi:10.1071/EN05030
- [4] R. M. Town, H. P. van Leeuwen, *Environ. Chem.* **2005**, 2, 90. doi:10.1071/EN05032