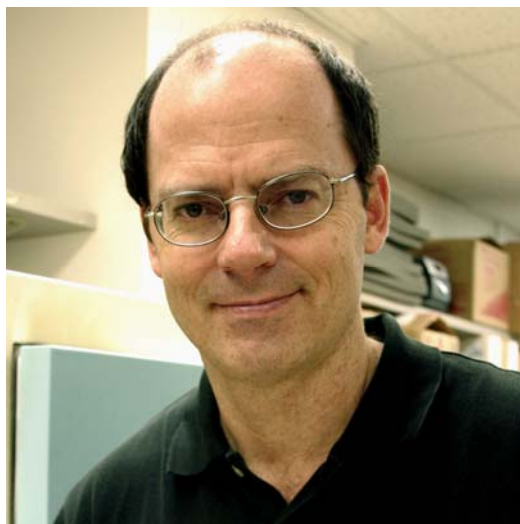


## William R. Newman (1955-



William R. Newman was born on 13 March 1955 in Chicago, Illinois. He chose to attend the University of North Carolina-Greensboro as an English major. His elegant prose still reflects his interest in good writing, but it was his reading that led him to consider the subject of Chymistry. Under the guidance of Elizabeth Sewell he read and researched the works of William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and W.B. Yeats. He found that these writers were influenced by the works of the alchemists Paracelsus and Van Helmont. He fell in love with this genre and determined to become a true historian of Chymistry.

His first adept was encountered in the context of a consortium with Guilford College. O.T. Benfey, known for his excellence both as a historian and a chemist, was teaching at Guilford. With Benfey's help, Newman designed an interdisciplinary major in the history of science. After tasting the joys of chymistry, there was only one place to further his sorcerer's apprenticeship, Harvard. His undergraduate excellence was recognized with an NSF Fellowship for graduate work. After completing his Masters degree in the History of Science, he pursued a peripatetic quest for the scholarly philosopher's stone. He obtained a Medieval Academy of America Grant to study Arabic palaeography(1980). He studied alchemy under the scholar Robert Halleux at the Universite de Liege(1982-1983). He followed the sources with a Sheldon Traveling Fellowship(1983-1984) and a Whiting Fellowship(1984-1985). He wrote his thesis, "*The Summa Perfectionis of Pseudo-Geber*" under the direction of John Murdoch at Harvard(1986). All

along the academic way, he was recognized as a star: The J.R. Partington Prize in 1982, The Schuman Prize in 1986, and the Alexander Koyre Prize in 1989.

After graduation he joined Stonehill College in Easton, MA, but was soon brought back to Harvard(1989). He progressed through the ranks at Harvard, but in 1996 Indiana University lured him to Bloomington, Indiana. He was promoted to Full Professor in 1998, to the Ruth N. Halls Professorship in 2004, and to the Distinguished Professorship in 2009. He is currently the Director of the Catapult Center for Digital Humanities and Computational Analysis of Texts.

In addition to dozens of published articles, Newman's books have gone from glory to glory. The published version of his thesis(Brill, 1991) created a sensation when he established that the *Summa Perfectionis* was actually written by Paul of Taranto. He also became the expert on George Starkey, the Harvard educated alchemist who was Boyle's tutor and Newton's favorite alchemical author. His two books on the subject, *Gehennical Fire*(1994) and *Alchemy Tried in the Fire*(2002, with L.M. Principe) are landmarks in the scholarly study of alchemy. From his standing in the Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry(SHAC) he has broadened his influence with the publication of *Atoms and Alchemy*(2006).

As if his legacy of achievement were not already enough for any scholar, he has devoted his last seven years to the Chymistry of Isaac Newton Project([www.chymistry.org](http://www.chymistry.org)), an on-line edition of Newton's alchemical writings. While Newton wished to conceal that fact that he was an adept, Newman has made it possible for all of us to pursue the philosopher's stone, both academically and chymically.