

This book is based on a three-day symposium organized by the volume's editors at the 195th National Meeting of the American Chemical Society in Toronto, Canada, on 5-11 June 1988. The 39 papers in the volume are subdivided into those dealing with the foundations of electrochemistry (12 papers), those dealing with organic and biochemical electrochemistry (four papers), those dealing with electroanalytical chemistry (16 papers), and those dealing with industrial electrochemistry (seven papers). Given the fact that most academic electrochemists now view themselves as analytical chemists, the section on the history of the more recent developments in electroanalytical chemistry is perhaps the most valuable part of this book and nicely supplements the earlier symposium volume on the history of electrochemistry, edited by George Dubpernell et al. and published by the Electrochemical Society in 1978, which dealt largely with the historical foundations of basic electrochemistry and the history of industrial electrochemistry.

As with all volumes of this sort, there is a certain unevenness in both the quality and intent of the papers. Several are really current technical reviews, rather than historical retrospects, and at least one is a plea for an alternative interpretation of electrochemical mechanisms. Nevertheless, it should prove valuable to future historians as a starting point for characterizing the state of academic electrochemistry in the 1960's and 1970's.

FROM THE CHAIR

The dawning of a new decade seems to inspire both individuals and institutions to reassess themselves. Where are they now? Where have they been? Where are they going? HIST is no exception and the evaluation is a rewarding one. In 1981, according to the ACS office records, our Division had 303 members. Currently, the total for all HIST members is at or over 800. In 1981, we ranked 30th of the (then) 31 divisions in size. Currently we are 28th of 32, three steps higher. All of this is most satisfying, but I believe we are still getting our act together and an even more glorious future awaits. HIST has a rather unique position among the Divisions - it is hard to imagine any chemist as not having an interest in at least some aspect of the Division's territory. (Probably only CHAS and PRFR can also make this claim). So why aren't we the single largest Division with, say, 10,000 members? Partly, I believe, because we have an image problem. We are viewed as grey-bearded types occupied with decaying volumes in musty rooms, as nattering on about "obsolete" matters, or as "liberal arts"-oriented types who really don't think like chemists, even to the cluttering up of the teaching of chemistry with non-essential background. In all such cases, we are perceived as having no relevance to the practice of modern chemistry. Obviously, we have our work cut out for us. It is not enough



Jack Stocker
1990 Chair

to quote the adage that those not knowing their history are doomed to repeat its mistakes. Some don't believe this and, mostly, nobody is listening. So obviously, our first goal is to get their attention. Now here's my plan...

I propose we work on two fronts: 1) Activities likely to gain wide attention, i.e., ones that will provoke conversation and advertise our existence, and 2) Projects that have personal utility to a large segment of our colleagues (probably most notably in the education area). More specifically, for the "activity", the Division might undertake to prepare a utilitarian, stripped-down handbook that could be entitled "Genealogy for Chemists", permitting the bulk of ACS members to trace their chemistry roots. This softcover handbook would be published as a Division undertaking and sold as inexpensively as possible. An informal evaluation suggests a 300-page compendium, possibly 3,000 names, the listing running to the time of WWII, and (probably limited to) those Ph.D. academicians who have trained chemists. Such a handbook would certainly provide hours of entertainment for our colleagues, would certainly lead to write-ups/reviews in a number of places, and could even provide useful data for seeking new and interesting correlations.

For projects of "personal utility", I would like to propose the following. In each of the more traditional areas of training, (i.e., general, organic, analytical, physical, inorganic and, possibly, bio-) the Division would undertake the preparation and publication of inexpensive, softcover, modest-sized (i.e., 200 pages or less) reference books providing brief background details for the significant names in that particular area of chemistry (possibly one per page). In addition to all the usual items of importance, i.e., date of birth, country, where educated, significant professional positions, major contributions, each entry would feature up to half-a-dozen brief items of

interest from that chemist's/scientist's background, preferably of a personal nature, that would make him/her more real and/or more interesting. For example: he had nine children, or was married four times, or fought in a particular war, or believed in spiritualism, or spent five years in jail, etc., etc.

The collection for general chemistry would appear first; subsequent work might depend on the reception of this first effort. Later books might be promoted through some sort of tie-in with the appropriate divisions, i.e., the Organic Division could market the "organic" one to its members at some profit to the Division per copy sold. The project would permit every chemistry teacher across the country to enliven his/her lectures by the simple investment of a very few minutes before class times. The service would be noted as coming to the teacher courtesy of HIST.

Obviously, all of the above makes certain assumptions. Do we want to have a significantly larger Division? Is it appropriate or desirable to devote the Division's energies and resources to what are, at best, marginally scholarly activities. I suggest "yes" to both questions - greater size and recognition can lead to greater influence and I believe all Division members share at least some measure of fervor in bringing to/reminding our colleagues of the value of HIST's activities. And it should be noted in defense that the proposed activities are clearly service-oriented.

So I should like very much to hear from HIST's members about their reactions to the above. Support? Hostility? Apathy? (i.e., your not writing could be so interpreted!) Are you interested enough to consider working on any of the several projects mentioned? Please do write. In any case, stay tuned for further developments.

Jack Stocker, University of New Orleans

AWARDS

The Dexter Award

The 1990 Dexter Award for outstanding accomplishment in the history of chemistry has been awarded to Dr. Colin A. Russell of the Open University. The award, which consists of a cash prize of \$2000 and an engraved plaque, will be presented at the Fall National ACS Meeting in Washington, D.C.

Born in 1928, Dr. Russell received his B.Sc. degree in chemistry in 1949 and a postgraduate degree in education in 1950. These were followed by a M.Sc. in the history and philosophy of science in 1958 and by Ph.D. and D.Sc. degrees in 1962 and 1978, respectively. After a 20-year career teaching chemistry, Dr. Russell became Senior Lecturer in the History of Science and Technology at the Open University in 1970 and Professor in 1981. Author or coauthor of ten books (including two chemistry texts) and more than 50 articles on chemistry



Dr. Colin Russell

and the history of science, Dr. Russell is perhaps best known for his classic study, *The History of Valency*, which appeared in 1971. He is currently in the process of completing the second volume of a biography of the 19th century English chemist, Edward Frankland.

The Division would at this time also like to solicit nominations for the 1991 Dexter award. Nominations should include a complete vita for the nominee, consisting of biographical data, educational background, awards and honors, publications, and presentations and other services to the profession; a nominating letter summarizing the nominee's achievements in the field of the history of chemistry and citing unique contributions which merit a major award; and at least two seconding letters. Copies of no more than three publications may also be included, if available. All nominations should be sent to Dr. John Heitmann, Secretary, The Division of the History of Chemistry - ACS, Department of History, The University of Dayton, Dayton, OH 45469 by 1 January 1991. It should be emphasized that the award is international in scope and that nominations are welcomed from all quarters. Previous winners have included historians and chemists from Germany, France, Holland, Hungary, and Great Britain.

The Outstanding Paper Award

The 1990 Outstanding Paper Award has been given to Dr. James J. Bohning of the Beckman Center for the History of Chemistry for his paper, "The 1893 World's Congress of Chemists: A Center of Crystallization in a Molecular Mélange", which appeared in the Spring 1989 issue of the *Bulletin* (1989, 3, 16-21). The award, which consists of \$100, a certificate, and \$150 worth of books from Reidel, will be presented to Dr. Bohning at the Fall National ACS Meeting in Washington, D.C.