

## Celebrating the International Year of Chemistry

In 2008, the 63rd General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed 2011 the International Year of Chemistry (IYC 2011) to highlight the importance of chemistry. The resolution is part of a United Nations strategy to draw attention to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014), and the stated goal of IYC 2011 is to increase interest and generate enthusiasm for chemical sciences among young people. Under the banner “Chemistry—our life, our future”, the IYC 2011 hopes to drive future innovations in chemistry.<sup>1</sup>

The IYC 2011 was officially launched in Paris on January 27, 2011 with approximately 1,000 attendees from 60 countries. The International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are the primary organizations overseeing this global event, along with several other chemical societies and institutions worldwide. The four main quarterly themes for the IYC 2011 are health, energy, environment, and materials, emphasizing the key role of chemistry in solving many of the biggest challenges facing mankind today.

The IYC 2011 coincides with the 100th anniversary of Marie Curie’s award of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, the first to be received by a woman. Today, women make up approximately 30% of researchers in chemical sciences, but since Curie’s award, only three other women have won a chemistry Nobel Prize.<sup>2</sup> Thus, IYC 2011 also aims to highlight the contributions of women to chemistry and draw attention to the struggles that women still encounter globally in this field.

Another key component of IYC 2011 is the global outreach program, “Water: A Chemical Solution”, to educate children worldwide about the role chemistry plays in water quality. In what could end up being recognized as the biggest chemical experiment ever conducted, school children from across the world will test properties of water, such as salinity and acidity, and carry out filtration and solar still purification in their neighborhoods with equipment that is freely accessible and of negligible cost. Small-scale chemistry kits are also being distributed to schools in some developing countries. This worldwide endeavor will result in the production of an interactive global map at the end of the year displaying the results and highlight the critical need for international collaboration in conducting scientific research.

The American Chemical Society (ACS) celebrates the IYC 2011 with several exciting programs. ACS has initiated a monthly *IYC Virtual Journal* to bring into focus the transformative power of chemistry.<sup>3</sup> The contents of each issue will highlight several published manuscripts in the 39 peer-reviewed ACS scientific journals, as well as its weekly news magazine, *Chemical & Engineering News*. Each issue will be subdivided into the four category themes: Energy, Environment, Health, and Materials. The journal content is freely accessible throughout 2011.

Another initiative, *365: Chemistry for Life*, is an interactive calendar of facts and trivia related to some of the greatest intellects and accomplishments in chemistry.<sup>3</sup> The first entry (Day 1) calls attention to the first issue of Chemical Abstracts Service, a division of ACS and the world’s most comprehensive

source of chemical and scientific information.<sup>4</sup> Within the *365: Chemistry for Life* calendar, a user can select from one of the four themes of IYC 2011. Some of the days in the calendar have been left blank intentionally; students and teachers are encouraged to submit the name of a chemistry-related person or innovation. Selected entries will be entered into a monthly drawing for cash cards and a December drawing for an iPad, iPod Touch, and iPod Nano. High school chemistry clubs and ACS Student Chapters (organizations for undergraduate chemical science majors) can apply for grants ranging from \$250–\$750 to support activities within the scope of the goals for IYC 2011.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, an *IYC Bulletin* provides ways in which IYC events can be initiated. To subscribe to this bulletin, send an email to [iyc2011@acs.org](mailto:iyc2011@acs.org) with “iyc-bulletin-subscribe” in the subject line to gain access to information and resources for planning IYC 2011 events. To learn more about IYC 2011 please sign up to the ACS Network ([www.acs.org/network](http://www.acs.org/network)) and join the “2011 International Year of Chemistry-IYC-at the ACS” group for further details on planned events.

In the animated video by Bytesize Science entitled “A Day Without Chemistry”,<sup>5</sup> a young man watches daily amenities disappear before his eyes, demonstrating the power of chemistry we often take for granted. The International Year of Chemistry also highlights chemical advances integral to our lives and well-being, and I encourage you to join the ACS in celebrating these achievements.

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### REFERENCES

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