As *Chemical Reviews* Enters the Millennium Year

In April, 1974, partway through my term (1967−1976) as Editor of *Chemical Reviews*, the journal celebrated its 50th anniversary. To celebrate the occasion I wrote a very brief history.[1] I will not repeat it here, except to note *Chemical Reviews*' auspicious beginnings. Its first Editor was W. A. Noyes (Illinois); the first issue contained articles by four of the most distinguished chemists of the time (one a Nobelist). Their subjects would be impossible to treat now in a year of issues (for example, "Organic Radicals", by Moses Gomberg).

So as we enter the millennium year, how will *Chemical Reviews* continue to be useful to chemists? In a way, I was forced to think about this problem immediately upon becoming Editor, having been invited to speak at a symposium on "Critical Reviews" before the ACS Division of Chemical Literature.[2,3] A summary of what I wrote then may still be pertinent.

Rapid expansion of the chemical literature has increased the need for well-written reviews of all types, particularly of critical reviews. Such reviews extract from the morass of verbiage those contributions which are most 'significant', focus attention on major problems, and ignore trivia. They not only summarize the field at the time of writing, but suggest new directions for profitable inquiry. Timeliness, broad appeal, and unconventional organization may be factors that enhance a critical review's value and impact. Authors preferably should be established investigators familiar with the nuances of a subject, though some of the most influential reviews of all time[4] were written by brilliant young investigators early in their careers. Editors have a strong influence by inviting authors and using a modest honorarium (introduced during my editorship) as an inducement and token of appreciation.

The present editors are to be congratulated on the spectacular job they have been doing. From a bimonthly when they began, *Chemical Reviews* moved to eight issues/year in 1988 and to a monthly in 1999 (*Chemical Reviews*' 75th anniversary). They introduced the immensely popular and successful 'thematic issues', often with 15 or more reviews in a single issue, assembled by guest editors.

Are the reviews being read? A spot check I made of articles in recent single issues of the *Journal of the American Chemical Society* and the *Journal of Organic Chemistry* showed that 40−50% of the articles contained a reference to a *Chemical Reviews* article (and most of the others referenced some other review journal). So yes, they are influential. Will they continue to be so? It is difficult to predict what changes new technology will bring and how these will affect the ways we do and publish new chemistry. I am reminded of the true story about 50 economists who were asked to make certain predictions about the economy. They were accurate about 30% of the time; a coin flip might have done better. So much for expertise. Still, with vigorous editors such as we have now, I venture an optimistic guess for a healthy future for *Chemical Reviews*.

References

(1) Hart, H. *Chem. Rev.* **1974**, *74*, 125.
(2) ACS 155th National Meeting, San Francisco, April, 1968. The papers and symposium discussion were published in the *Journal of Chemical Documentation* **1968,** *8*, 231−245; the current name of this journal is the *Journal of Chemical Information and Computer Sciences*.
(3) Hart, H. *J. Chem. Docum.* **1968,** *8*, 241.
(4) Three examples are Lingane, J. J. Interpretation of the Polarographic Waves of Complex Metal Ions. *Chem. Rev.* **1941,** *29*, 1; Price, C. C. Substitution and Orientation in the Benzene Ring. *Chem. Rev.* **1941,** *29*, 37; Streitwieser, A., Jr. Solvolytic Displacement Reactions at Saturated Carbon Atoms. *Chem. Rev.* **1956**, *56*, 571. One might easily find others.

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