

Chemical Reviews: The Odyssey of a Reader

In 1980, as I began my fourth year as Editor of *Chemical Reviews*, I wrote an editorial¹ in which I pointed out the virtues of the scholarly art of writing review articles, one of which was its value “of integrating and committing to posterity the knowledge and understanding that have been accumulated with much human effort”. When I was writing these words, it occurred to me that I had already been for some years part of that posterity and that my own career had benefitted greatly from published articles in *Chemical Reviews*, many of which had been seminal contributions to their individual fields. As we celebrate the 100th volume of *Chemical Reviews*, I would like to point out some of those contributions as well as to mention briefly the previous editorial history of *Chemical Reviews*.

A brief history of *Chemical Reviews* was written by my predecessor, Harold Hart, on the occasion of its 50th Anniversary² in which he commented, among other things, on the great start for the publication. Only seven editors have served since the publication was founded in 1924:

1924–1929	William A. Noyes
1930–1938	Gerald Wendt
1939–1949	W. Albert Noyes, Jr.
1950–1966	Ralph L. Shriner
1967–1976	Harold Hart
1977–1984	Anthony M. Trozzolo
1984–	Josef Michl

An indicator of the stature of the publication is provided by recent studies on citation data whereby *Chemical Reviews* consistently was found to have the greatest impact factor (the average number citations per source item) of any chemistry journal.

In my own graduate and research careers, this “impact” began early when I had to prepare graduate seminars at the University of Chicago. All three of my seminars were related to topics which had recently appeared in *Chemical Reviews* and dealt with diverse subjects as Hammett acidity functions,³ charge-transfer complexes,^{4,5} and stereospecific polymerizations.⁶ My graduate research was in free-radical chemistry, and several seminal reviews^{7–9} greatly enhanced our understanding of the field. Even reviews by G. N. Lewis¹⁰ and Moses Gomberg¹¹ which appeared in the first volume in 1924 were important readings.

Many examples of the benefit of *Chemical Reviews* articles have occurred through the years of my research career (prior to my tenure as Editor) with topics such as carbenes,¹² liquid crystals,¹³ nitrenes,¹⁴ sydnone,¹⁵ and a variety of research studies related to photochemistry.^{16–19} In addition, the two articles on carbocation chemistry^{20,21} which were published as a single issue in 1956 served as a primer for that particular research area.

During my tenure as Editor (1977–84), a number of changes occurred in the publication. These included an increase in the size of the editorial board, color pages, publishing the photos of authors, and the

highest impact factor of any ACS publication. One particularly interesting anecdote has to do with the “role” played in encouraging Jeffrey Seeman to expand the historical section in his review²² of the Curtin–Hammett principle which led to his increased interest in the historical aspects of chemistry and to the “Profiles, Pathways, and Dreams” series published by the American Chemical Society.

Also, I would like to extend this “odyssey” from “reader” to “editor” by congratulating the present editors on the success and current stature of the publication, particularly with the expansion in the number of issues per volume and the implementation of topical issues. Of the seven editors since 1924, only Ralph Shriner has had a longer term than the present editors, and hopefully, they will pass him soon.

Since an “odyssey” is supposed to be a round trip (at least in the Homeric sense), let me conclude by returning to the 1980 Editorial:¹

“—we must continue to encourage the scholar who is willing to take the time to integrate the gains which have been achieved in a particular field and that he be aware of the rewards that come not only in heightened appreciation and knowledge in a given area, but also in allowing the other members of the chemical community to share in the fruits of the perspective and perception which are the hallmarks of a true scholar.—”

With the current editorship providing that encouragement, we can look forward to a bright future for *Chemical Reviews* as an important capstone in the construction of the chemical literature.

References

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