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Foreword

The old saying of a job being only finished when all the paperwork is done applies to many situations in life, for example to the organization of a major scientific meeting. By reading these lines, you will hold in your hand this special issue of *Journal of Chromatography A*, publishing papers presented at the 16th International Symposium on Microscale Separations and Analysis or – in a world where such a title is way to long – HPCE 2003. For us, the chairmen of HPCE 2003 and you the participants and readers of this issue, this is an opportunity to reflect back one more time on the meeting. Also, our assignment as meeting chairmen, which started some three years ago, will come to an end with these lines.

HPCE 2003 was held at the Hotel Manchester Grand Hyatt in San Diego from 17 to 22 January 2003. The HPCE series started 14 years ago in Boston by Professor Barry Karger and is now on a schedule rotating between Europe and the USA in alternate years with extra symposia in the Asian-Pacific area. In his foreword in the *Journal of Chromatography A* proceedings volume in 1989, Professor Karger stated: “High performance capillary electrophoresis (HPCE) is a field undergoing major advancement at the present time”. Although instrument manufacturing is consolidated to a few suppliers and there are new frontiers such as microfluidics, proteomics and single cell analysis his statement is still true. HPCE as scientific research in general is a moving target with new challenges and is reinvented anew with each edition.

This year, the symposium came back to San Diego for the third time after meetings held here in 1991 and 1994. Having a meeting in San Diego in January was beneficial in several respects, as several participants from Northern Europe, Canada and the East

Coast would gladly testify. One fellow HPCE researcher mentioned the temperature gradient from boarding the plane at home to deboarding it in sunny California was a solid 50 degrees, resulting in a sudden mood change. In short, San Diego and the hotel certainly made for a perfect meeting environment.

In a small variation from the traditional schedule, the meeting started already on Saturday and ended on Wednesday night. As the HPCE crowd moved out of San Diego, American Football fans from all over the USA moved in to celebrate one of their yearly top festivities the Superbowl on the following Sunday. Since we were outnumbered by Oakland and Tampa Bay fans most of us left town with the brain tuned to theoretical plates and attomole sensitivities instead of kick-offs and touch downs. Besides, if you were looking for cultural side effects, you could either take in the natural beauty of San Diego and its surroundings or spend an evening at a classical concert in a HPCE exclusive. All participants enjoyed listening to eternal classics from opera, operetta and musicals performed by soprano Dagmar zum Hingst, accompanied by Simona Snitkovsky on piano.

The meeting facilities at the Hyatt also provided the ideal setting for 2 plenary sessions with 6 presentations, 16 parallel sessions with 108 lectures and 4 poster sessions with over 200 posters presented. In addition, instrument exhibition, industrial seminars, workshops on proteomics, genomics, CE in Pharmaceuticals and microfabricated fluidic devices were held. Short courses on CE–MS and the fundamentals of CE complemented the scientific program. The large lobby in front of the presentation auditoriums and the ample space of the combined

poster – industrial exhibition – coffee break hall provided excellent opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones as well as discussing the latest scientific developments during poster sessions, breaks and receptions.

The meeting had a proteomics/genomics emphasis in the first two days and concentrated on pharmaceutical and bioanalytical CE, microfabrication and lab-on-a-chip approaches in the last two days. The plenary lectures at the beginning and the end of the symposium summarized recent developments in genomics, proteomics and bioanalysis and providing direction where the field moves. The fast pace of scientific discovery was also evident in the shift away from genomics, which has been the much-discussed topic at the last HPCE meeting in the USA. Instead more space was devoted to coupling CE to mass spectrometry and general bioanalytical applications.

A meeting runs smoothly and without any surprises when the organizers and the hotel staff work very closely and efficiently. In our case, we had excellent help from the California Separation Science Society (CaSSS) with Catherine Stewart and Karen Bertani. Also, the members of the scientific, the organizing and the program committee – Ruedi H. Abersold, Heinz Engelhardt, William S. Hancock, Stellan Hjerten, James W. Jorgenson, Barry L. Karger, Andreas Manz, J. Micheal Ramsey, Shigeru Terabe, Edward S. Yeung, Annelise E. Barron,

Noberto A. Guzman, Michael P. Henry, Leon Yengoyan, William Amoyal, Len Cummins, Nebosja M. Djordjevic, David Heiger, John S. Hobbs, Stevan B. Jovanovich, Robin Mhatre, Antion J. Ricco and John Wronka – provided very much appreciated help and insight to the arrangement of an attractive and excellent scientific program. As usual, Dr. Zdenek Deyl handled the collection and review process for this special issue in the effortless manner that comes with great experience.

We would also like to thank all speakers, presenters and participants from all over the world, from academia, industry and government. They made the meeting stimulating and fun! The meeting was slightly smaller than in the past two years, but the science was first class as the scientific level of publications in this issue proves it. As you flip through the pages and recall your poster or break discussions, we wish you continued success in your work.

As the final chapter of HPCE 2003 closes with the publication of the meeting proceedings, HPCE is alive and well. We will witness this at HPCE'04, which will be held in Salzburg, on 8–12 February 2004 under the chairmanship of Professor Wolfgang Linder, University of Vienna, Austria.

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Andr as Guttman