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Foreword

The 27th International Symposium on High-Performance Liquid-Phase Separations and Related Techniques (HPLC 2003) was held in Nice, France, 15–19 June 2003. The symposium was concentrated in 4 days, which appeared a good idea, gathering all the delegates until the end of the symposium.

The total number of attendees was 1255, coming from 50 countries all over the world, which reflects the impact of the symposium series. Two parallel sessions were held, with 107 oral presentations, and 580 posters were on display. The majority of participants came from industry, but it is noteworthy that 18% were students. The Organizing Committee provided some financial help to young scientists and students to attend the symposium and the Halasz foundation sponsored six students as well. One remarkable fact is that the congress was attended by many newcomers, which demonstrates the attraction of the HPLC series. An exhibition with 80 booths and more than 200 exhibitors was located between the lecture halls on 2400 m^2 floor space. It was well attended, since lunches were organized all around the exhibition hall. On Sunday, 15 June, three short courses were given and a special workshop was held on 17 June. Vendor seminars were attended by overflow crowds.

P. Kintz from the Institut de Medecine Legale (Strasbourg, France) opened the symposium with a description of some recent developments in forensic toxicology. He pointed out the power of LC–MS–MS in solving criminal cases and emphasized that it is a useful complement to GC–MS. He was followed by J. Michael Ramsey (Oak Ridge, USA) who dealt with nanofluidics that will result in new technological capabilities. There were 14 topics in the oral presentations (monoliths, new detection techniques, stationary phases, polymers/supercritical fluid chromatography, proteomics, chiral separations, selectivity, from theory to purity, miniaturization, sample preparation, capillary electrophoresis, phase characterization, drug discovery, and hyphenation). Some topics deserved more than one session (three were devoted to proteomics, two to monoliths, two to stationary phases, two to capillary electrophoresis, and two to "from theory to purity"). This last topic was to honor Georges Guiochon for his outstanding achievements in every domain of chromatography. T. Rabilloud (Grenoble, France) delivered the closing lecture, dealing with facts, fiction, and future in proteomics.

As with other meetings, the core of the symposium was the poster sessions. There were two poster sessions, encompassing 18 topical areas on Monday and Tuesday and 16 topical areas on Wednesday and Thursday. The Poster Award Committee, chaired by Ron Majors from Agilent, noted that this year's posters were of highest quality. The international panel of scientists defined criteria for selection, and there was a long discussion before selecting the three awardees. It is impossible to quote some lectures or posters without being unfair to others who also made impressive achievements. Reading these volumes of the *Journal of Chromatography A* is the best alternative, and we must thank E. Heftmann who edited the large number of manuscripts.

A congress is a unique opportunity to exchange ideas. Delegates enjoyed the city of Nice and its neighborhood, they could appreciate the Mediterranean way of life, gathering around a drink while appreciating the cool of the evening.

The year 2003 was the 100th anniversary of Tswett's first paper. Elsevier sponsored an enjoyable party, and it is a pleasure to thank them. I want to thank all those who worked hard to make this symposium successful: the Scientific and Organizing Committees, the MCI organization, our sponsors, the Acropolis personnel and all those who helped.

Liquid-phase separations, such as chromatography, electrophoresis and electrochromatography are active fields. Miniaturization, high throughput, multistage separations, and hyphenation will keep us busy for some years. We look forward to seeing you in Philadelphia, and look forward to new advances in the field.

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