

## Preface

From 4 to 6 February 2004, the *8th International Symposium on Hyphenated Techniques in Chromatography and Hyphenated Chromatographic Analyzers (HTC-8)* was held at the Congress Centre SEC@Bruges in Bruges (Belgium). The previous meeting, HTC-7 held in February 2002, had set a new record with circa 400 delegates. HTC-8 surpassed that record with over 465 delegates from 40 countries from all over the world. This proved that the HTC symposium series is becoming one of the more important series of symposia in this field of science. In this HTC-8 meeting, as usual, academia, industry and government were well represented among both speakers and attendees.

Within the framework of and in parallel with HTC-8, a one-day symposium on *Food Safety* was organised on 5 February 2004. Theme for this symposium was “*How far must the analysis of chemical and biological contaminants go to ensure food safety*”. The programme included scientific lectures and special talks of leading authorities of international organisations (World Food Safety Organisation, European Commission and the National Food Safety Agency of Belgium).

The HTC-8 symposium was preceded by eight short courses on: Element-selective detection for chromatography and electrophoresis by inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (Robert Houk and Freddy Adams); Life-instrumentation hyphenation (Susan Lunte and Norman Dovichi); Polymer separations (Peter Schoenmakers); Hyphenated techniques for polymer separations (Peter Schoenmakers); Comprehensive two-dimensional gas chromatography (GC × GC) and cryogenic modulation in GC (Philip Marriott and Robert Shellie); Modern sample preparation (Janusz Pawliszyn); High-throughput chromatography (Tom Lynch and Peter Myers). These short courses took place at the *Novotel Centrum* in Bruges.

The HTC-8 symposium was organised under the auspices of the Royal Flemish Chemical Society (KVCV) and the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC). Valuable financial support was given by the “Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek Vlaanderen” (FWO), the Province of West-Vlaanderen and the Directorate General JRC of the European Commis-

sion, and by a number of sponsoring companies. Especially the sponsorship of our main sponsors Applied Biosystems, Waters Corporation, Thermo Electron/Interscience and Agilent Technologies was greatly appreciated.

The international organizing committee—Keith Bartle, Hernan Cortes, Tom Lynch, Peter Schoenmakers, Rudy Senten (secretary) and Robert Smits (chairman)—was aided by an advisory international scientific committee consisting of Pat Sandra (chairman), Robert Smits (secretary), Freddy Adams, Keith Bartle, Hugo Billiet, Hernan Cortes, Bart Devreese, Eddy Esmans, Koni Grob, Jos Hoogmartens, Tom Lynch, Phil Marriott, Janusz Pawliszyn, Fred Regnier and Peter Schoenmakers and a highly motivated executive committee consisting of Pieter Dieltiens, Edwin Aerts, Hubert and Moniek Lammens, Patrick Demeyere, Laurent Daems, Etienne Jooker, Gerard De Molder and Chris Ostermeyer.

The scientific programme comprised oral presentations, poster presentations, discussion sessions, tutorials as well as product seminars. These covered basic principles, fundamental aspects, methods, developments and applications of the various hyphenated chromatographic techniques and analysers. The lecture programme contained over 90 papers, presented in both plenary and parallel sessions. The well-attended poster sessions comprised almost 200 posters describing all aspects of hyphenated separation techniques. The high quality of the poster contributions and the novelty of the scientific content of the presentations were highly appreciated.

During seven tutorials, prominent and recognised experts in the field gave an overview of the basic principles, methods, developments and applications in the field of: Recent improvements in understanding splitless injection and CSR-large volume splitless injection (Koni Grob); New developments in sorptive extraction (Pat Sandra); Off-flavours in consumer products; From sampling to identification techniques (Marc Termonia); Miniaturized LC coupled to MS: a look at columns and LC systems (Filip Lemièr, Erwin Witters, Walter Van Dongen and Eddy Esmans); Ultra-fast GC and ultra-fast GC–MS for the analysis of real complex samples using 50 mm and 100 mm columns (Luigi Mondello);

Microfabricated fluidics devices for chemical and biochemical analysis (Michael Ramsey); Beyond proteomics (Bart Devreese).

The three topical discussions were also very successful: lively round-table debates chaired by Freddy Adams (Problems in elemental speciation), Peter Schoenmakers and Philip Marriott (The 2004 great GC  $\times$  GC debate) and Pat Sandra (Food safety).

A very inviting instrument, book and supplies exhibition, comprising an almost complete programme of more than 20 companies created the ideal forum to assess the state-of-the-art of modern instrumentation. Furthermore, during four product seminars, sponsoring companies (Thermo Electron/Interscience, Waters, Agilent Technologies and Applied Biosystems) had the opportunity to go into detail about their new achievements and developments.

An international jury under the chairmanship of Pat Sandra ensured that the most innovative paper or poster contribution of the conference could be acknowledged. During the closing session this HTC-Award, sponsored by Elsevier Science, was presented to Professor Dr. Ir. Gert Desmet of the Free University of Brussels, Belgium. The nomination was based on his oral contribution presented at the meeting, "Macro-molecular flows and separations in nano-channel systems".

There was a full and lively social programme, including welcome and farewell parties, a beer degustation evening with walking dinner and tasting of the famous Belgian beers and a conference dinner in the historical surroundings of the West Flanders Provincial Government.

The papers published in this symposium volume give an overview of the state-of-the-art of modern hyphenated separation techniques.

The organisers would like to thank the speakers and the participants for their engagement, all sponsors for their support and Professor Udo A.Th. Brinkman for his willingness and immense help in editing this symposium volume of *Journal of Chromatography A*.

The next HTC symposium (HTC-9) will be held in York (UK) from 8 to 10 February 2006. Short courses will precede HTC-9 on 6 and 7 February 2006. HTC-9 will be organised in conjunction with the ExTech 2006 meeting, which will also be held in York, from 6 to 8 February 2006. Short courses will follow ExTech 2006 on 9 and 10 February. Further information together with some pictorial memories of HTC-8 is available on the conference website at <http://www.ordibo.be/htc>

*Oostduinkerke, Belgium*

Robert Smits