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Publisher *Taylor & Francis*

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Journal of Liquid Chromatography & Related Technologies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713597273>

Meeting Report

To cite this Article (1992) 'Meeting Report', Journal of Liquid Chromatography & Related Technologies, 15: 9, 1593 – 1594

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/10826079208018311

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10826079208018311>

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MEETING REPORT

ANALYTICAL EQUIPMENT EXPOSITION AND CONFERENCE (ALEX'91)

October 29 - 31, 1991

San Jose, California

The inaugural meeting of ALEX was the first meeting of its type. One is always somewhat skeptical about the attendance, especially coupled with the rather lackluster performance of two earlier inaugural meetings held on the east coast. Unlike previous scientific meetings, ALEX was organized into four "tracks": Analytical Laboratory Management; Analytical Laboratory Regulations and Procedures; Analytical Laboratory Technology Assessment; Analytical Laboratory Automation. October 29th and 30th had keynote presentations on R&D 2000-Perspectives on the Future and Balancing Business and Science: The New Imperatives of Laboratory Management. I was gratified to see substantial dialogue among the participants, so attendees were not subjected to a series of monologues. Additionally, since the sessions were focused, one could obtain an overview of a particular segment or topic. It was also very interesting that, while there was a display floor with approximately 150 exhibitors, there were a negligible number of vendor presentations, which we all know can become nothing more than "sales presentations."

I attended those sessions devoted to laboratory automation, and they were well attended, with an active question-answer period. There were eight sessions in the laboratory automation track: The Automated Laboratory: An Overview; Automation in Sample Preparation; Robotics: Will They Ever Fulfill Their Promise?; Case Studies in Selecting and Buying A LIMS; Data Standardization; Integrating PC's With Higher Systems; PC-Based Laboratory Information Management Systems; Instrument Connectivity.

The organizers provided each attendee, at each session, with an evaluation form to permit them to comment on the session. These forms have now been forwarded to the various track chairs and session chairmen for their review and comments. The preliminary evaluation has been very positive.

Attendance at this first ALEX was 2200, not including vendor/exhibitors. This seems to be a very respectable number for a first meeting. Also, the general tone of the conference was positive. As with all firsts, ALEX will experience some growing pains. ALEX'92 is scheduled for November, 1992, in San Francisco. I look forward to continued growth of this focused meeting.

W. J. Hurst, Editor

Laboratory Robotics and Automation