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Book reviews

Comprehensive Coordination Chemistry. (Editor in Chief, G. Wilkinson; Executive Editors, R.D. Gillard and J.A. McCleverty.) Pergamon, Oxford etc. 1987. In seven volumes. £1600.00; US \$2450.00. ISBN 0-08-026232-5.

After the success of the excellent series of volumes on *Comprehensive Organometallic Chemistry* this companion series was awaited with much interest. The impression I have formed after consulting a range of inorganic chemists whose opinions I respect is that the overall view is that it does not come up to the standard of the earlier series but is nevertheless a valuable addition to the literature, and should be in all chemical libraries.

The editors faced the problem of the extent to which organometallic compounds should be included, and came up with the arbitrary and unsatisfactory decision to exclude “any species where the number of metal–carbon bonds is at least half the coordination number of the metal”. The unreality of this distinction, along with some other aspects of the volumes, raises again the issue of whether there is any justification for continuing to treat coordination chemistry as a distinct entity, though one would have thought that the answer had been definitively given in their authoritative textbook by Cotton and Wilkinson, who in dealing with the issue of whether there is any justification for treating coordination compounds as a separate class, distinct from molecular compounds, wrote: “on the basis of actual fact (i.e. neglecting the purely traditional reasons for such a distinction) there is very little, if indeed any, basis for continuing the dichotomy”. Would it not perhaps have been better to update and expand the much earlier *Comprehensive Inorganic Chemistry*?

Whatever the doubts about its scope; this set of volumes will be much used. Fortunately the covers and binding are of high quality, but, even so, if the appearance of the volumes of *Comprehensive Organometallic Chemistry* in the library I use is a guide, this new set will look badly battered within a few years.

Reviews of individual volumes appear below.

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Comprehensive Coordination Chemistry, Volume 1, Theory & Background, xiii + 613 pages, ISBN 0-08-035944-2.

This volume follows the established pattern of the earlier “*Comprehensive Treatises*” in chemistry from the Pergamon Press. It contains seventeen chapters or sections of chapters from as many internationally recognised authorities. Like all such multi-author compendia it has its strengths and its weaknesses. It opens with an