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## Book review

### *Current Topics in the Chemistry of Boron*

G.W. Kabalka (ed.) (University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN), Royal Society of Chemistry, London, 1994, 406 + xiii pages, £59.50, £39.50 to members  
ISBN 0-85186-535-6

This book, published by the Royal Society of Chemistry as Special Publication No. 143, documents the Proceedings of the 8th International Meeting on Boron Chemistry, held at the University of Tennessee, 11–15 July 1993. The presentations have been organised into six chapters covering organoborane chemistry, chiral organoboranes in synthesis, medical applications of boron, carborane chemistry, metallaborane chemistry, and heteroborane derivatives and complex borohydrides. Within each chapter there are longish well-documented and pretty comprehensive plenary lectures, six-page invited lectures and four-page contributed lectures. The editor has done well in bringing the wide-ranging subjects discussed at the conference into a logical order. The space available has been well used – there are very few empty or half-empty pages – and the printing is of high quality. However, the use of camera-ready material with abrupt changes of type-size and font makes for an overall messy appearance.

Books of this kind prompt two key questions: who are they for and are the contents available in a more accessible form elsewhere? Cynics will answer that they serve the needs of publishers (but in this case the publisher is a learned society rather than a commercial house) and the needs of the authors whose publication counts are increased, their promotion prospects improved, and the ratings of their departments in research assessment exercises raised. But do they serve the interests of the readers? These will be academic students and industrial chemists seeking an up-to-date account of

boron chemistry. They will comprise two broad categories like the delegates to IMEBORON conferences themselves: those working on topics relating to hydroboration and applications in organic synthesis, and the inorganic boron chemists fascinated by the infinite structural variety of electron-deficient compounds, their syntheses and reactions, and the challenges to bonding theory which the study of these compounds makes. These two groups attend parallel sessions at the conference: contact between them is social rather than intellectual. And so it is in this book. The chapters are individually excellent: though the shorter communications will surely rapidly become out-of-date, some of the plenary lectures give superb overviews and draw together work from many projects over many years.

Researchers in all areas of boron chemistry should have access to some part or other of this book and it is clearly desirable that the reviews in it should be made available to more than the 200 or so delegates at the IMEBORON conference. However it is an open question whether this end is best achieved by putting the reviews into a single volume. Although this is available at a discounted price to learned society members funds are still scarce and there are other review journals to which libraries already subscribe. Comments of this kind cannot however detract from the fact that this book is a fascinating account of the range of current interest in boron chemistry and the main lectures in particular are most enjoyable to read.

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