Editorial

The central position of silicon in the periodic system of the elements, at the borderline between organic and inorganic chemistry on one hand and between metallic and non-metallic elements on the other hand, results in a manifold and unique chemical behavior of its compounds, hardly paralleled by any other element. Furthermore, silicon and silicon compounds have contributed decisively to the technical progress. Technical applications range from mass commodities to highly sophisticated special materials, from ceramics to polymers, from medicine to microelectronics.

To keep pace with scientific and technical developments in other industrial countries in this important area, the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG) and the *Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung in Österreich* (FWF) decided to establish national priority programs (called *Schwerpunktprogramm* in Germany and *Forschungsschwerpunkt* in Austria). The programs are strongly linked to each other as well as to some Swiss groups and help to strengthen the scientific ''silicon community'' in the German-speaking countries.

The German *Schwerpunktprogramm* ''Specific phenomena in silicon chemistry: compounds for the construction and understanding of extended systems with novel properties'' was established by the DFG in October 1994 and started its work in July 1995 with 34 projects. The program was evaluated in 1997 and then extended into a second funding period with 35 projects offering employment to 40 chemists, physicists, and materials scientists, mostly PhD students, from 28 universities and research institutions. The Austrian *Forschungsschwerpunkt* ''Novel approaches to the formation and reactivity of compounds with silicon-silicon bonds'' was established in October 1996 and started its work in January 1997 with 9 PhD and postdoctoral students working in 5 projects at the Technical Universities of Graz and Wien.

One of the tools of the linked priority programs are regular symposia which provide a forum for scientists from different disciplines and representatives from industries to discuss their results, exchange ideas, and find possibilities for synergies. After two very successful plenary meetings in Bielefeld in 1996 and 1997, the third symposium took place in Werfenweng near Salzburg in June 1998.

The time of the symposium marked mid-term of the German program and the end of the first funding period of the Austrian program. Therefore, the date is appropriate to summarize part of the results in a special publication. I am very glad that the Editors of *Monatshefte für Chemie* and the *Springer Verlag* provided the opportunity to publish a special issue of this journal on silicon chemistry on that occasion and that most of the chemical groups participating in the projects agreed to contribute research papers. Although most of the papers are rather short due to

page restrictions, the special issue gives a very good overview on the current chemical (and partly physical) activities in the joint Austrian/German/Swiss program.

The authors agreed to dedicate this special volume to Prof. ***Peter Jutzi*** on the occasion of his 60th birthday on October 21, 1998. Prof. *Jutzi* is the coordinator of the German priority program and was heavily involved in its planning and organization from the very beginning. Without his energetic efforts, there would have been less success in establishing the priority programs and keeping them vivid.

My special thanks go to *Isabella Krcmaricic* and Prof. *Hermann Kalchhauser* for their technical assistance in publishing this special volume.

Ulrich Schubert
Issue Editor