

# Conference Report

## SCS Fall Meeting 2020: A Success Story Based on ‘Plan B’

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The Fall Meeting 2020 was unique in many ways. First, the venue was virtual, with rooms for plenary, oral-, poster sessions and the Commercial Exhibition. ‘Chemistry and the Environment’, a new thematic session was successfully implemented. A new form for the presentation of the posters was introduced, and, finally, the award winners, instead of being called to the stage, appeared online for a brief hello to the audience (see collage of winners on backside of the cover of CHIMIA, issue 10/2020).

Initially planned as a two-day event at the University of Bern von Roll Areal, as in 2017, it became clear early on that the COVID-19 situation would not allow us to organize a physical meeting with nearly one thousand participants. Instead, we planned an on-line meeting as close as possible to the traditional format, *i.e.* omitting the sessions on startups and promising young researchers the day before as introduced three years ago.

Even though we did not have a complete plan for the technical infrastructure of the meeting, the Fall Meeting Organizing Committee, the sponsors and the exhibitors were very supportive of ‘Plan B’. All we knew at the time was that we would design virtual rooms for the different sessions (plenary, parallel, poster, Commercial Exhibition) through which the participants would enter and select the presentation they wish to attend.

### The Virtual Platforms

Whereas on-line lectures and presentations became common practice very early, it was much less obvious how we could ensure attractive conditions for the poster presenters who always make up the majority of participants. Also, it was not clear how to organize a virtual Commercial Exhibition attractive for both exhibitors and visitors. Finally, in Spring, the choice of virtual infrastructure for this size meeting was not obvious, and different solutions had to be explored.

Instead of displaying a (static) image of a classical poster, we decided to grant the presenters a three-minute slot to showcase their research in the form of a video (Fig. 1). These videos were on display for the entire week. For the Commercial Exhibition we also created a virtual room through which the participants could enter and view the online booths of the exhibitors. Interactivity, *i.e.* the exchange between presenter and viewer, was granted through the channels offered by the presenters.

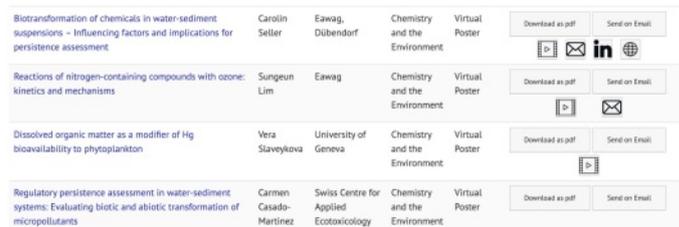


Fig. 1. The Posters as seen by the participant after entering the room for a particular thematic session. The first button starts the video, the others, if available, open the communication channel to the author.

The response of the community was amazing: In response to the Call for Contributions, we received 399 abstracts for short talks or virtual posters, we could welcome twelve exhibitors, and found sponsors for all nine thematic sessions! This is well beyond our expectations, and it conforms that the Fall Meeting is a welcome opportunity for our young scientists to communicate their results.

For the event, we acquired ten licenses for channels from Zoom, one with up to 1'000, and nine with 300 participants maximally. At the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry of the University of Bern the ‘Control Center’ (Fig. 2) was installed, which controlled and supervised the online activities.



Fig. 2. A look into the Fall Meeting Control Center at the Computer Lab of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry of the University of Bern.

Apart from a few glitches early on in the meeting, it all went very well, and the feedback of the participants was positive, even enthusiastic. The attendance, in terms of sessions established, was very good. Peak attendance was reached at 11:05h with 526 participants (see Fig. 3).

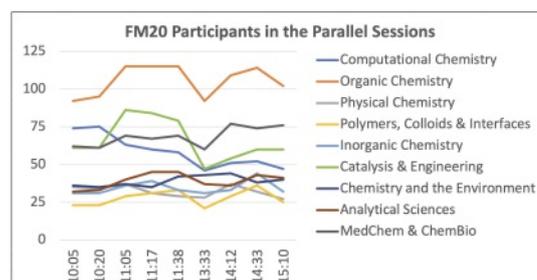


Fig. 3. The number of participants for each session as a function of the time of the day. The actual number of participants will be higher as some shared the screen with their research group or institute.

### Looking at the pros and cons of 'Plan B'

- + Positive feedback from all stakeholders.
- + Students had the desperately needed opportunity to present their research to a greater audience.
- + Presenting posters as short videos was very well received. The effort that went into the creation of the posters was admirable.
- Interactivity, *i.e.* the exchange between presenter and viewer needs to be improved. To some extent, also a way of communication the participants have to become more comfortable with.

Even though it was an unforgettable experience, we all hope that Sandrine Gerber and her team will be able to run next year's Fall Meeting at the EPFL according to 'Plan A' again.

### Award Lectures at the SCS Fall Meeting 2020

#### Werner Prize Lecture 2020

«Molecular capsule catalysis: Ready to address current challenges in synthetic organic chemistry?»

**Prof. Konrad Tiefenbacher**, University of Basel/ETH Zurich was awarded the Werner Prize for his innovative and original research in the field of supramolecular catalysis with focus on catalysis inside supramolecular containers, so called 'capsules'.

#### Sandmeyer Award Lecture 2020

«Development of the Commercial Manufacturing Process for Ipatasertib»

**Dr. Andreas Schuster**, Dr. Caroline Maierhofer, Dr. Stephan Bachmann, Dr. Hans Iding, Dr. Christian Lautz, Dr. Régis Mondière, Dr. Philipp Schmidt, Dr. Isabelle Thomé, from the Ipatasertib Team at F. Hoffmann La-Roche, and **Dr. Christoph Strasser** from Dottikon Exclusive Synthesis AG were awarded the Sandmeyer Award for the development of an economical, scalable and sustainable process to produce Ipatasertib, an Akt kinase inhibitor currently tested in Phase III clinical trials for the treatment of metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer and triple negative metastatic breast cancer.

#### Industrial Science Award Lecture 2020

«Tailored Catalysis for the F&F Industry»

**Dr. Denis Jacoby**, Firmenich SA, Geneva was honored for his outstanding achievements at Firmenich especially the development of major new processes for several key perfumery ingredients that are manufactured on multi MT scale today.

#### Senior Industrial Science Award Lecture I/2020

«Natural Product Sciences in Modern Drug Discovery and Paths to the Future»

**Dr. Frank Petersen**, Novartis Pharmaceuticals AG, Basel, was honored in recognition of his outstanding contributions in the field of natural product research over three decades that includes the investigations for several products on the market or in clinical evaluation, the integration of natural product-based scaffolds classes in chemical biology for the identification of novel targets, but also the partnerships in microbial sourcing and in accessing isolated plant metabolites in Africa, China, and Thailand.

#### Senior Industrial Science Award Lecture II/2020

«Discovery of a new medicine Risdiplam, a Survival of Motor Neuron-2 (SMN2) gene splicing modifier for the treatment of Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA)»

**Dr. Hasane Ratni**, F. Hoffmann-La Roche, Basel, was honored in recognition of his outstanding contributions to medicinal chemistry and his track record of delivering successful clinical development candidates resulting in five molecules entering

human clinical trials. This includes the seminal work on RNA interaction with small molecules leading to the discovery of risdiplam.

#### Paracelsus Prize Lecture 2020

«Discovery and Optimization of Enantioselective Catalysts through Chemoinformatics»

**Prof. Scott E. Denmark**, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (USA), was awarded the Paracelsus Prize for his role as an internationally recognized leader in the development of novel concepts of catalysis, of very useful synthetic methods, and insightful mechanistic investigations in organic chemistry.

We greatly acknowledge the support of our long-term sponsors. We particularly welcome Casale, Schrödinger and Zeiss as new Fall Meeting endowment sponsors (rhs).

### General Sponsors



### Session Endowments



### Virtual Exhibitors

