CHIMIA **2003**, *57*, No. 10

EDITORIAL

Chemistry in Neuchâtel 1993–2003

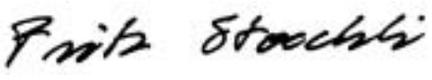
Ten years ago, the Chemistry Department of Neuchâtel University introduced itself in a special issue of CHIMIA and we feel that it is time to show the changes which have taken place since 1993. By doing so, we follow the recent presentation by our colleagues at Geneva University and show that academic research and the teaching of chemistry in Switzerland is doing well. The following series of papers includes also contributions from other sections of the University and of CSEM, in order to illustrate the broad basis of chemistry in Neuchâtel. It was felt by most of us that it would be most appropriate to start this presentation with a major contribution by our colleague and now professor *emeritus* Klaus Bernauer. He went into retirement in 2000, but still remains a member of the National Research Council. His successor is Prof. Thomas Ward, who comes to us *via* the University of Bern.

As far as our department is concerned, a large part of its research may be described as 'Catalysis and Molecular Recognition'. This line was defined at the end of the 1990s and is a basis for future development. As a direct consequence, a young *professeur boursier*, Dr. Thomas Bürgi, working in the field of heterogeneous and enantiomeric catalysis and sponsored by the Swiss National Science Foundation, has recently joined the staff of seven professors.

The Chemistry Department has followed the general trend observed in Switzerland and in Europe. With permanently more than fifty PhD students, the doctoral school has remained an asset in the Faculty of Sciences, where it produces the largest number of doctoral degrees. A recent survey also shows that, at the undergraduate level, chemistry remains an important purveyor of teaching and training, providing nearly one third of the faculty's services. This somewhat hidden contribution shows clearly that chemistry is – and will remain – an important factor in the sciences.

Contacts with other departments, at the national and the international levels, have been further developed and the ERASMUS scheme works at all levels. The BENEFRI convention, linking the Universities of Bern, Neuchâtel, and Fribourg, has produced useful exchanges in the field of chemistry and led to the creation of a common laboratory in chemical crystallography, based in Neuchâtel. The Department has also acknowledged some outstanding contributions by external colleagues, which led to the award of three degrees of *Doctor honoris causa*, by the University of Neuchâtel, to Profs. J.B. Donnet (UHA Mulhouse, 1993), A. von Zelewski (University of Fribourg, 1998) and P. Baccini (ETHZ, 2003). Sadly, in 1998 professor André Jacot-Guillarmod passed away at the age of 73 years. He, and others, played a major role in the creation of our department between 1968 and 1970.

We are confident that the Chemistry Department will be able to meet the new challenges resulting from the Bologna system. The latter also offers new opportunities for the future of chemistry in Neuchâtel.



Prof. Fritz Stoeckli
On behalf of *Collège des professeurs'*