

Editorial



This issue of CHIMIA commemorates several decennial anniversaries of special events promoting chemistry at the University of Zurich. The flagship event being the centennial of the chemical laboratories at Rämistrasse 74 built for and designed by Nobel Prize winner Alfred Werner in 1909. These labs replaced the dark 'catacombs' of Rämistrasse 45 where chemistry had previously been practiced. Paul Karrer, who started his studies in the catacombs, remarked about the horrible conditions of those labs and how splendid was the transition to Rämistrasse 74. Unfortunately, Werner could only spend a few years in these labs before his early passing. Karrer, however, enjoyed four decades of chemical research in these labs, where his Nobel prize winning work was done. The main

lecture hall was an impressive chemical auditorium within the walls of which thousands of chemistry students received their education.

Two articles focus on the theme of historical aspects on chemistry at UZH. One is the first of a three-part series by Professor Heinz Berke on Werner and his work. Berke's article is a great introduction to Werner's history and we look forward to the two future installments. The other is a translation of an essay originally submitted for a prize competition to Karrer in 1968 by then student Karl Hermann. We are thankful to Andre Dreiding for referring this manuscript to us, to Gillian Harvey for the excellent translation into English, and to Simon Duttwyler for painstakingly redrawing all the illustrations in electronic format.

Another important anniversary is the hemi-centennial of the Karrer Medal. In 1959, the Karrer medal was established by friends of Karrer to commemorate Paul Karrer's 70th birthday. This medal ceremony included the bestowing of the medal and the delivery of the first Karrer Medal lecture. This event has occurred every 1-2 years since, with the 34th medal being awarded this year to Akira Suzuki. An amazing wealth of chemistry has been recognized through these 34 chemical celebrations. One article in this issue gives some background to the Karrer medal and some statistical information about the collection of recipients. In addition, we have accumulated head shots of the 34 awardees to create a pictorial 'hall of fame'.

In addition to these professional anniversaries, we have the personal pleasure of acknowledging the 80th birthday of our good colleague Wolfgang von Phillipsborn. Oliver Zerbe has prepared a lovely biographical sketch of 'Fibo's' career. A goodly portion of that career took place in the Rämistrasse labs, but transcended the move to the Irchel campus in 1978, which makes a nice bridge between the old and new laboratory settings.

Continuing with the historical theme, we have an inaugural celebration in 2009, the creation of a Chemistry E-Museum. This web-based 'musEum' brings together the Chemical Institutes' collective archive of chemical artifacts in digital format. Heidi Weber is the master architect of the electronic online musEum, which guides visitors through a series of texts, images, and videos about the history of chemistry at UZH. In addition, there is a modern section, which connects the history to the present day activities in chemistry. At present, the musEum is kicking off as part of the 2009 celebrations, but it is still a work in progress. The expected full release date is 2011 as part of the United Nations, International Year of Chemistry celebration.

Finally, this issue continues with the second contribution to the 'Chemical Education at School' column, with a shortened highlight of a matura project from Kantonsschülerin Nicole Steck on the synthesis of fluorescent molecules, who undertook her practical work in our laboratories at UZH. This is joined by what will become a regular part of the Education column, a contribution from the SGCI's new Simply Science (www.simplyscience.ch) program. SimplyScience is the youth website for science and technology. It demonstrates that in our daily lives we are surrounded by science: "How does hairspray work?" Or "Why does an apple turn brown when a piece is bitten off?" Young people receive comprehensive information on professions and rapid help with their chemical questions. An event calendar incorporates all the existing commitments of SGCI Chemie Pharma Schweiz, its member companies and partners concerning the advancement of young people.

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