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Happy 50th Birthday, CHROMATOGRAPHIA!

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CHROMATOGRAPHIA turns fifty this year. The journal was launched in 1968 under the editorship of D. R. Deans, G. Gouichon, L. Szepeszy, and R. Kaiser, as a “vehicle of rapid information exchange” in the field [1]. Looking back upon that first editorial, as well as upon the articles published in the first year, is both instructive and inspirational.

As stated, the original intent of the journal was to “meet the pressing demand for rapid transmission of information” [1]. To aid in not just a rapid, but also a more thorough, dissemination of knowledge, papers were published in either English, French, or German, with much of the information (title, summary, and figure captions) often in all three languages. The journal also published so-called “Green Pages” at the time, practicality-oriented papers written in all three languages. Most of the articles in that first year, and in those that immediately followed, dealt with gas chromatography (GC) and thin-layer chromatography, with only a small number of publications on liquid chromatography (LC). Even then, it was realized that the combination of chromatographic separations with mass spectrometric detection was an extremely powerful and sometimes unique way of solving a problem.

Notable in that first year were papers on heart cutting in GC [2] and on chromatographic nomenclature [3, 4]. In the former, D. R. Deans introduced flow-switching valves (taps) that were outside the GC oven, resulting in an inexpensive, easy-to-operate ambient temperature flow-switching system that enabled heart cuts to be obtained from GC separations, even when capillary columns were employed in the separation. The consequences of this for two-dimensional GC, and subsequently, two-dimensional LC demonstrate the groundbreaking nature of Deans’ paper.

To be able to communicate unambiguously with separations scientists worldwide, we must all speak a common “scientific language”. By the latter, we do not mean necessarily English but, more accurately, the “language of chromatography”: We must all understand what is meant by a given term and how certain concepts and figures of merit are defined. Providing a platform for the dissemination of this information has been a goal of the journal beginning with Volume 1, with “Nomenclature in Chromatography” papers by Bayer et al. and by Stahl [3, 4]. The importance of maintaining our field’s syntax and grammar, as laid out in these early publications, would later be recognized and polished by, most notably, Leslie Ettre in a series of IUPAC papers. We look forward to bringing you soon in CHROMATOGRAPHIA news of the latest IUPAC revision of these guidelines.

As the journal enters its second half-century, we see many changes which have occurred over the years, but we also note a constancy and commitment to our founding principles. As per universal custom, papers are now published exclusively in English. Manuscripts employing liquid chromatography now constitute a majority of the material published in the journal. A commitment to rapid dissemination of information remains paramount, exemplified by the recent introduction of accelerated publication papers: at the authors’ request and justification, the Editors will consider whether a paper should be sent to reviewers who can provide a very fast turnaround (within, e.g., 1 or 2 weeks), so that exceptionally important research can be brought to the separations community at large within the quickest possible timeframe, without sacrificing a commitment to quality. Moreover, with the advent of on-line publication, accepted papers can now be assigned a digital object identifier (doi) within days of article acceptance.

As times change, so has CHROMATOGRAPHIA. The journal has strived to incorporate all new separations methods, including capillary-based and supercritical separations, macromolecular separations (both chromatographic and field-based), microfluidics, sample preparation methods, etc., and recognized not only the role of mass spectrometry as a detection method but also its standing as a separations method per se. Special issues and topical collections now allow us to focus more intensely on particular areas of research, something soon to be augmented by the journal’s introduction of virtual issues this year. Our commitment to, and reliance on, the next generation of separations scientists is witnessed not only by the presence of a number of rising stars (alongside well-established scientists) on our Editorial Advisory Board, but also in last year’s topical collection “Young Investigators in Separation Science” [5]. The outpouring of interest by our readers for the papers in this collection made it immediately evident to the Editors that highlighting the work of young scientists should be the subject of a recurring special issue.

The global nature of science, in general, and the critical role played by separations, has signified a broadening in the geographic scope of the journal. While the overwhelming majority of early articles were from the United States and Europe, contributions from these areas now compete with those from China, India, and both the Middle and Far East. A challenge for the Editors will be to incorporate more research from Australia, Africa, and Central and South America, areas which are currently underrepresented in our pages.

In its second half-century, it remains committed to the founding Editors' original intent of rapid dissemination of information among the separation science community; to the incorporation of novel separations and related techniques into its fold; to the support of the community at large, with special attention to the up-and-coming generation of separations scientists; and, with a rejection rate of approximately 80%, to the dissemination of novel research of the highest significance and quality. We can only achieve this with the integral help of our wonderful contributors, and with the continued support of the amazing reviewers who per force toil anonymously, sharing of both their time and expertise in support of our mission. To both these groups, we owe our immeasurable gratitude.

And so, as the journal enters "middle age", we take this moment to reflect on its past and to enthusiastically say Happy 50th birthday, CHROMATOGRAPHIA!

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