

Editorial

Molecules, MolBank and ECSOC-4

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Received: 18 January 2000 / Published: 19 January 2000

It is one of the great ironies of our information age that at the same time that we have the technical capability to make information freely available world-wide, budget problems are seriously endangering the free access to scientific information. The crisis of our science libraries has unfortunately intensified with the availability of access to many of the traditional journals via the Web. Ironically, even learned societies often demand considerably more for a license for the Web version of their journals than for the paper subscription alone. In contrast to the initial optimistic predictions by some prophets of the Internet, the budget situation of our libraries has become worse as they are faced by seeming endless price increases, and many academic science departments and even huge companies are routinely forced to reduce the number of their subscriptions to journals. At the same time, the number of novel compounds synthesized by chemists or identified from an isolation procedure increases exponentially. Finally, it has become clear that libraries of molecules will be an important tool for solving the challenges of the future and for finding the molecular solution to many of the problems of our society.

As an answer to many of these challenges Dr. Shu-Kun Lin from MDPI launched *Molecules* (ISSN 1420-3049; <http://www.mdpi.org/molecules>) in 1995, with the stated purpose of providing a service to the chemical community at large by publishing full experimental and spectroscopic data of newly synthesized compounds. Three major goals were pursued:

- The experimental data should become fully available without the usual restriction applied in many traditional chemical journals (small print, highly condensed versions, re-

porting of only selected data or in the communication format, even suppressing the experimental part completely).

- The journal should strive to fully use the enormous potential of the World-Wide Web and thereby provide access to this valuable data to scientists from all over the world.
- At the same time, the electronic journal should encourage the preservation of samples of the reported compounds. As methods to identify compounds and their properties become more and more sophisticated the preservation of a collection of compounds and their availability has become an important factor.

In 1998 Dr. Esteban Pombo-Villar helped to increase the visibility of the electronic journal especially by promoting the format of the electronic conferences (ECSOC-2 to ECSOC-3), and took over responsibility for *Molecules* as Editor in Chief during 1999. In a period when things are changing so quickly, the survival for five years of a journal of a completely new format without the financial backing of either a learned society or of a big publishing house, must be viewed as a success story. The success of *Molecules* is even more impressive in view of all the odds that were against it. Thanks to the intensive personal efforts of Dr. Shu-Kun Lin and Dr. Esteban Pombo-Villar, *Molecules* has just started its fifth year in good health. We have to thank them for their tremendous efforts promoting electronic publishing in chemistry.

In view of his many other responsibilities Dr. Esteban Pombo-Villar has now asked to be replaced as Editor-in-Chief, but we are glad he will continue to support *Molecules* as a member of the Editorial Advisory Board. Starting January the 1st, I have accepted to act as Editor-in-Chief of *Molecules*. Together with Dr. Derek J. McPhee, Dr. Luc Patiny, Dr. Andrey V. Gutnov and Dr. Shu-Kun Lin we hope as a team to remain true to the principles which helped to launch and to establish *Molecules* and to help them flourish. Dr. Thomas Wirth has agreed to take over the responsibility for the planned ECSOC-4 meeting and we are looking forward to an excellent collaboration in the hope of promoting our science.

As *Molecules* is becoming bigger the editorial procedure and the refereeing will have to take full advantage of the possibilities of electronic handling of manuscripts. It is also clear to all of us that the future of *Molecules* will depend very much on the very successful unique concepts of the preservation of compounds and the concept of demanding the full experimental description of reported compounds. As useful as these concepts are, *Molecules* wants to be more than just an extensive database of new compounds. In order to achieve this goal *Molecules* needs the collaboration of all scientists. It is our hope to attract as many scientists as possible to submit their results to *Molecules*, taking advantage of the speed of electronic publication and the other possibilities offered by the electronic media to showcase their scientific contributions. It is also obvious that in doing this, we will not compromise the accepted norms of the peer review system.

In accordance with Dr. Esteban Pombo-Villar's plans, we have decided to make a clear distinction between reports on the synthesis of known or previously unknown compounds, which authors should consider for publication in the MolBank (<http://www.mdpi.org/molbank>) section of *Molecules* as short notes, and manuscripts describing a significant advance in science, which qualify for publication as full papers in *Molecules*.

We hope that *Molecules*, MolBank and ECSOC-4 will keep ahead of the astonishing pace of developments in the field of science publishing. We, from the Virtual Editorial Office, will try to make *Molecules* as attractive as possible for you. Please help us, be it as author of a manuscript, as a scientist contributing short notes to the MolBank section, as a chemist participating in the upcoming electronic conference ECSOC-4 or be it as a referee of your peer's work. Science and scientific journals can only survive if a significant number of you are willing to collaborate and to develop the new methods of electronic publishing. Let us not just complain about the inevitable increase subscription prices of our journals, let us do something about it.

Best wishes for the year 2000!