

Section for Chemical Research of the NSCS

Chimia 52 (1998) 154–155
© Neue Schweizerische Chemische Gesellschaft
ISSN 0009–4293

Presentation of the Section for Chemical Research (SCR) of the New Swiss Chemical Society (NSCS)

Jacques Weber*

Abstract. The Section for Chemical Research (SCR) of the NSCS intends to provide a forum for chemists active in research, so as to promote exchange of ideas and collaboration. The SCR organizes or supports symposia, seminars, and scientific meetings, with a special emphasis on the Fall Meeting of the NSCS, which is *de facto* the largest annual forum of Swiss chemistry. Particular attention is paid by the SCR to the promotion of research results obtained by young chemists so as to help them starting their career. At present, the SCR membership stands at 465 members.

History

The Section for Chemical Research of the NSCS was founded at the same time as the NSCS itself, *i.e.*, on April 22, 1992. Indeed, this memorable date has witnessed the birth of the NSCS as resulting from the merging of the Swiss Chemical Society (SCS) and the Association of Swiss Chemists, and it was decided to structure the newborn NSCS into four sections: Section for Chemical Research (SCR), Section for Medicinal Chemistry, Section for Industrial Chemistry, and Section for Analytical Chemistry. Actually, in contrast with the other three Sections which are focused on specific categories of chemists, the profiles of the SCR members cover a broad range of interest, with chemical research as a common denominator. Clearly, the SCR was founded with the purpose to mainly gather most of the former SCS members. This feature is still valid today: with its 465 members, which makes it the largest section of the NSCS, the SCR is a link between academic and industrial chemists who are all involved to some extent in chemical research. However, according to the fact that the members of the former SCS issued somewhat more from academia than from industry, the first Committee of the SCR, made of 14 members, comprised only two chemists

from industry. It was chaired for two years by our colleague Prof. *B. Giese* from the University of Basel, and all Swiss Universities and ETHs were represented. In 1995, the present author succeeded to Prof. *B. Giese* as chairman of the Section, the Committee being today made of the following persons:

- *Peter Belser*, University of Fribourg
- *Heinz Berke*, University of Zürich
- *Edwin Constable*, University of Basel
- *Martin Karpf*, *Hoffmann-La Roche* AG, Basel, treasurer
- *Samuel Leutwyler*, University of Bern
- *André Merbach*, University of Lausanne
- *Paul Müller*, University of Geneva
- *Martin Quack*, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zürich
- *John Robinson*, University of Zürich
- *Daniel Stahl*, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Lausanne
- *Raphael Tabacchi*, University of Neuchâtel
- *Jacques Weber*, University of Geneva, chairman
- *Roland Wenger*, *Wenger Chemtech*, Riehen, vice-chairman
- *Wolf-Dietrich Woggon*, University of Basel

This Committee is in charge for the 1997–1998 period, and elections will take place at the end of 1998 for the 1999–2000 period.

Purposes of the Section

According to its statutes, the Section has the following purposes:

- 1) to organize a scientific forum for chemists active in research, so as to promote all fields of chemistry and interdisciplinary collaboration as well,
- 2) to organize scientific sessions of the Spring and Fall Meetings of the NSCS, symposia, seminars, recycling courses, *etc.*, possibly in collaboration with the other sections of the NSCS,
- 3) to establish friendly and fruitful collaborations between High-School chemical institutes and industrial laboratories involved in research,
- 4) to promote publication of research results in journals or meeting proceedings.

It is the Committee's opinion that all these four goals are equally important. It is indeed essential to stress nowadays on the importance of both inter-laboratories and

*Correspondence: Prof. J. Weber
Department of Physical Chemistry
University of Geneva
30, quai Ernest-Ansermet
CH-1211 Geneva 4
Tel.: +41 22 702 65 30
Fax: +41 22 702 65 18
E-Mail: Jacques.Weber@chiphy.unige.ch

interdisciplinary collaboration, high-level scientific education and continuous formation, and large-scale publication and dissemination of research results (publish or perish). The SCR is therefore particularly careful at the achievement of these goals and at the advancement of chemical research in Switzerland, with a special attention paid to the promotion of young chemists.

A frequently asked question concerns the structure of the section itself. Chemical research is indeed a broad topic, and one might ask whether subsections dealing with the various fields of chemistry (*i.e.*, organic, inorganic, physical, *etc.*) should not be created, in a similar way as in the American Chemical Society. The present Committee is of the opinion, however, that the SCR members are not numerous enough to split them into subsections which would not have the critical mass. In addition, the present situation leads to fruitful discussions and interactions between chemists from various horizons.

Activities of the Section

Since its creation six years ago, the SCR has been mainly involved in organizing activities related to the purposes described above. A special emphasis has been placed on the Fall Meetings of the NSCS, which are *de facto* the largest annual forum of Swiss chemistry. Many important organization problems had to be solved, namely the location and venue of the Meetings, the gradual introduction of poster *vs.* oral presentations, the preparation of a high-level and attractive scientific program, the publication of the abstracts, *etc.* As to the location of the Fall Meetings, the venue of Bern (Chemische Institute der Universität) definitely became too small in the early 90s, due to the increasing number of participants and scientific contributions. In addition, due to the importance of ILMAC for the NSCS and Swiss chemistry, it was decided to move the Fall Meetings to Basel and to organize them in the context of ILMAC every year this event takes place. To ensure a fair geographical distribution of the Fall Meetings, their location is therefore planned as follows:

- 1998 Zürich (ETH)
- 1999 Basel (ILMAC)
- 2000 Lausanne
- 2001 Basel (ILMAC becomes biennial)

The other points concerning the organization of the Fall Meetings have been

tentatively solved as follows: avoid as much as possible parallel sessions of oral contributions by promoting poster sessions, though this is of course not always possible, and publication of all the abstracts in CHIMIA prior to the Fall Meetings. The SCR is continuously working at possible improvements of this organization, and comments from Section members are welcome.

In addition to Fall Meetings, the SCR has to organize every fourth year the Spring ones. That was the case in 1994 in Neuchâtel on the topic 'Organometallic Chemistry Including Organic Synthesis and Catalysis' and in 1998 in Bern on the topic 'Hydrogen Bonds: From Structure and Dynamics to Molecular Recognition'.

The SCR has also organized *ad hoc* colloquia, such as those of 1995 (Festkolloquium zu Ehren von Prof. K. Dressler, ETHZ, and Colloque à l'Occasion du 30ème Anniversaire de l'Institut de Chimie Physique, EPFL), and it was instrumental in organizing the 36th IUPAC Congress, Geneva, August 17–22, 1997. A mini-symposium on the topic 'Protein Structures as Templates for the Design of New Drugs' was set up by the SCR in the context of ILMAC 1996, and the Section had also contributed to the organization of the 1st Swiss COST Chemistry Symposium held in Basel at this occasion. Last but not least, the SCR had organized a Competition for Students of Gymnasium (College) Classes in 1995–1996, which met with a large success.

As to promoting publication of high-quality results obtained by young chemists, the SCR has decided to publish each year in CHIMIA a collection of short articles corresponding to the most remarkable posters or oral contributions presented at the Fall Meeting of the NSCS. This action should enable the authors of these contributions to develop their presentation, so as the whole readership of CHIMIA has a chance to be aware of it.

Finally, the SCR had submitted through the NSCS a proposal for a theme of the 8th series of National Research Programs of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) entitled 'Molecular Devices'. According to the latest news received by the Section, it seems that this proposal has some chance to be retained in the final choice to be made by the SNSF.

Future Activities

The SCR is ready to continue working on the organization of high-level scientific meetings and symposia. In addition, it

will as far as possible sponsor some events which could be of interest for its members. As of today, the following activities are planned:

- sponsorship to the Summer School in Computational Quantum Chemistry, Manno (TI), July 27–31, 1998 (homepage <http://www.cscs.ch/Official/SummerSchool>),
- organization of the Fall Meeting of the NSCS, October 15, 1998 in Zürich,
- co-organization of a mini-symposium on 'Principles of Molecular Chirality and their Significance for all Branches of Chemistry' to take place at the occasion of the 37th IUPAC Congress, Berlin, August 14–19, 1999,
- organization of a symposium on 'Supramolecular Chemistry and Molecular Recognition' to be held at ILMAC, Basel, October 12–15, 1999.

In addition, every proposal submitted by SCR members as to other future activities will be discussed by the Committee.

How to Become a Member of the SCR

In case you wish to become a member of our Section, you need first to be a member of the NSCS. To this end, you should access the homepage of the NSCS (<http://sgich1.unifr.ch/nscs>) and then click on 'Become a member' by selecting our Section in the interactive www form. If you are already a member of NSCS, then you may join the Section by contacting the author of this presentation.