

The Education of Literature Chemists*

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Three years ago the Division of Chemical Literature appointed a committee to determine what is being done in academic institutions to train students, majoring in chemistry or chemical engineering, to use the chemical literature. A year later the committee reported the results obtained in 330 replies to a questionnaire sent to some 600 institutions. One suggestion in the ensuing discussion was to hold a symposium on the training of literature chemists. Since this is an educational problem, the support of the Division of Chemical Education was sought. The present program, therefore, is the result of joint effort by the two divisions.

Every alert teacher knows the increasing difficulty of sampling adequately present chemical knowledge in any

course. Likewise, every alert practicing chemist is aware of the problem of keeping up with the annual accumulation of new material. In 1961, for example, *Chemical Abstracts* published abstracts of 118,337 papers and 26,249 patents. So great is this over-all problem that Louis H. Sarett, Director of Medical Research of Merck and Company, stated recently that perhaps the most imposing task facing organic chemists in the next quarter of a century is to find and correlate what is already known in this area.

The contributors to this program come from educational institutions, industry, a government laboratory, and Chemical Abstracts Service. Thus, they represent a cross section of different kinds of interests in the use of the chemical literature. Each considers the education of literature chemists from a particular view-point.

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Creating The Chemistry Librarian*

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More and better chemistry librarians are needed now to handle the vast amount of existing chemical literature and will be needed in the future to keep up with new material that is being issued at an accelerated rate.¹ This need—which, I believe, is obvious—is pointed up by four factors. First, the starting salaries for science librarians (including those in chemistry) today are, as they were in 1955,² considerably higher than those for all other beginning library school graduates. In 1959 the average starting salary for beginning library school graduates was \$4862,³ while a beginning chemistry librarian could expect about \$6000. In 1960 the average for beginning library school graduates was \$5083,⁴ while beginning chemistry librarians could expect \$7000 or better. Second, the quantity of chemical literature is increasing rapidly, as can be illustrated by the number of abstracts published in *Chemical Abstracts*: 7,000 in 1907; 78,689 in 1954;⁵ and 132,159 in 1960.⁶ Third, adapting the techniques of mechanical information retrieval to the needs of the chemist is an immediate problem, not a hypothesis for the future.

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* Baker Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N. H.

Cooperation between the librarian and the chemist in this area can be particularly fruitful, resulting in development of the most useful systems and avoidance of systems that would be unsuitable because of infrequent use and high cost. Finally, many companies have felt the need for at least minimum training for their untrained library personnel. This is illustrated by the fact that 68 librarians registered in two series of courses for beginners given by the Science-Technology Group of the Special Libraries Association's Boston Chapter in 1960. These librarians came not only from the Boston area, but from New Hampshire and Rhode Island; and one librarian even flew in from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.⁷

Once the need for better-trained chemistry librarians is realized, the solution of this problem should be easily accomplished, provided the chemistry profession, industry, and the library schools all do their part and learn to cooperate in the solution.

Chemists first must become more aware of the potential service that can be provided by a trained chemistry librarian. The chemistry librarian, as I see it, has several major functions. As custodian of materials in the library, he will establish a circulation system that will assure the