

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### CHEMICAL INFORMATION SCIENCE IN ACADEME

Dear Sir:

Your recent editorial (*J. Chem. Inf. Comput. Sci.* **1980**, 20 (2), 2A) called attention to a number of issues for which I also have a concern. In the 21 years I have been at Wilkes College, we in the chemistry department have always felt that the history and literature of chemistry was an important part of the curriculum.

In 1959 we required a one credit course in Chemical Literature and a one credit course in the History of Chemistry for our B.A. and B.S. degree programs. About 1970 we expanded the Chemical Literature course to two credits with the introduction of a "formal" 3-h library "laboratory" session. In 1980 we combined the two courses into a three credit "History and Literature of Chemistry" course. [The course outline is available on request.]

We have found that students generally approach the course with misgivings and doubt about its usefulness. When we have finished, however, their attitude has changed considerably. For example, the announcement of a field trip this past spring was greeted with little enthusiasm and much apprehension. After our visit to the Edgar Fahs Smith Collection and a demonstration of computer information retrieval at Rohm and Haas there was a complete reversal of opinion. After all, how often does one have the opportunity to personally examine one of Issac Newton's alchemical books from his library or obtain some pertinent references for a senior research project that would have been virtually impossible to obtain by conventional means?

Apparently our emphasis on literature and history is not the norm, as "Chem Lit" courses were among the first to be dropped in the curriculum crunch. When one of our junior chemistry majors spent the summer at a major university on a NSF-URP program recently, he spent the first 3 weeks in the library after the director found out that he could use Beilstein and other sources with ease.

I hope that your editorial will be a catalyst in reversing recent trends. I urge the Division to continue and expand its efforts in educational and curriculum matters.

**James J. Bohning**

Visiting Professor, University of Kentucky  
Lexington, Kentucky 40506

### CHEMICAL INFORMATION SCIENCE IN ACADEME

Dear Sir:

My purpose in writing you is twofold. First, I was so impressed by your editorial in the May 1980 issue of *J. Chem. Inf. Comput. Sci.* ("Chemical Information Science in Academe") that I wish to request permission to make copies

for my students. However, my second purpose is to make you aware of the existence of a program in chemical information science at Indiana University. Specifically, there are 3 courses available to both upper level undergraduate students and to graduate students. These are C400, Chemical Documentation, a 1-semester-hour course that emphasizes the traditional chemical literature in printed form; C401, Chemical Information Storage and Retrieval Methods and Techniques, a 2-semester-hour course which concentrates on computer applications for the retrieval of both bibliographic and nonbibliographic information; and C402, Research in Chemical Documentation, 1-2 semester hours, an arranged course which can be repeated for a total of 5 h.

Information science is stressed in the C401 and C402 courses, which utilize the facilities and personnel of the Chemical Information Center. The CIC was established in 1973 with the following goals:

- (1) To maintain awareness of current research and developments in scientific information handling, especially in Chemistry.
- (2) To adapt and apply new techniques and services to the information needs of the IU Chemistry Department.
- (3) To educate and train users of scientific information as well as information specialists and search intermediaries.
- (4) To aim for full cost recovery.
- (5) To engage in research in scientific information handling.

The CIC is a long-time subscriber to CAS computer tapes (current *CA Search*). Hence, our students in the advanced courses have the opportunity to work with the tapes to develop SDI profiles and apply the techniques of information science to the development of other products and services based on the tapes. A joint graduate program which leads to the degree "Master of Library Science—Information Specialist in Chemistry" has been in effect since 1970. (I have the distinction of being the first to complete the program (MLS, 1971).) Participation at the graduate level has been rather small until recently. However, we intend to publicize the program extensively in the coming year. Each course is offered during both the fall and spring semesters and usually during the 8-week summer session.

One of our aims is to build a reputation as the best and most nearly comprehensive program in all aspects of education for chemical information science that is available in this country. Our unique approach offers the student an opportunity to work in a research center where practical training can be obtained in chemical information science while working on an appropriate degree.

**Gary Wiggins**

Director, Chemical Information Center  
Indiana University  
Bloomington, Indiana 47405

## NEWS AND NOTES

### CAS DOCUMENT DELIVERY SERVICE

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