

Symposium

Challenges and Opportunities for Chemists in Patent Work*

Introduction

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Much has been said elsewhere about the problems created by the tremendous rate at which the over-all chemical literature is growing. A very significant portion of this increase is in that part of the literature which is represented by patents. For simplicity, consider the number of patent abstracts published in *Chemical Abstracts* for the years 1950 and 1960. In 1950 the figure was about 8,000 (which incidentally is roughly equal to the total number of *papers* abstracted in 1920). In 1960, however, there were 27,675 patents abstracted in CA from the patent offices of 23 countries.

The increased flow of inventions into the literature is a mark of scientific progress, and a great deal has been said about this in many circles. However, this growth in rate is such that more and more people are required to handle the work of procuring and interpreting patents. This work discussed in the symposium all requires technical training, and in addition some of it requires legal training. Many people—including many chemists—appear to think that patent work is a form of black magic rather than a form of scientific endeavor. Those of us

who are active in the field know of course that this is not true. This symposium has been put together in the hope of clearing up some of the confusion on this point—both for those who are just embarking on careers in chemistry and for those with professional experience in other areas who might find patent work more attractive if they knew more about it.

The authors of these papers were chosen in part because of the variety of their personal backgrounds and experience in American industry. They can thus present from a wide cross-section, a story of the fascinating variety of work available in the field of patents in the chemical industry of today. One is a woman and four are men; one chemical engineer and four chemists; one is a patent attorney, two are patent agents and two are neither. Some are from small companies and some from not-so-small companies.

The patent offices of the world were not represented on the panel—not because we dislike them, but because we thought it a big enough job to try to talk about industry's part of the problem in one morning. Those readers who are interested in learning more about that part of the field should have no difficulty locating papers which should serve their purpose.

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Criteria for the Chemist in Choosing a Career in Patent Work*

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It is generally agreed that the selection of a career or lifelong pursuit is one of the most important and most difficult decisions which face most people. Nevertheless, the selection of a career often is made without benefit of adequate guidance or significant personal experience, without a full awareness of one's abilities, and often without a mature conception of lifelong desires and ambitions. Fortunately, most of us can find success and happiness in any of a number of specific careers, especially when a fairly judicious choice is made as to the general nature of work in which a specific career is sought. Thus, the individual who decides upon a career in science might

find satisfaction and success in any of several specific branches within the realm of the scientific professions. Likewise, having chosen a career in chemistry, a chemist could no doubt find satisfaction in any of several fields of specialization.

There is the possibility, however, that an optimum specific career may exist for an individual and might be discernible by a careful analysis of those factors which generally influence career selection. This discourse is essentially directed toward those who are preparing for or are engaged in a career in chemistry and who might find that the field of patent chemistry would provide an optimum career in view of their interests and abilities. Early perception of an interest in a patent career is

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