also carried manageable deficits and the recovery was thereby moderated so that it will be gradual. In addition to accepting this interim arrangement, the Council also agreed to the setting up of a task force which will, in the immediate future, consult with all stakeholders, especially the National Adhering Organisations, to establish a new model on which to base the calculations of national subscriptions in the future. This new model is scheduled to be ready next year and will be sent for approval to the next Council meeting in Brazil in 2017.

As the end of my service as Treasurer of IUPAC approaches, I wish to thank my fellow Officers and the professional staff at the Secretariat for their unstinting support and help throughout. I am confident that all of the measures that have been put in place to improve and maintain our financial wellbeing will ensure that the Union can move on with confidence to celebrate its Centenary in 2019 and to continue for many years thereafter.

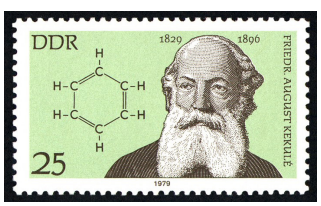
John Corish <jcorish@tcd.ie> has been treasurer of IUPAC since January 2008. He has served IUPAC at many levels since 1979, including chair of the Subcommittee on Materials Chemistry, president of the Inorganic Chemistry Division, and member of the Finance Committee.

Stamps International

See also www.iupac.org/publications/ci/indexes/stamps.html

Dreams Make Good Stories

It is impossible to know with certainty whether Dmitri Mendeleev envisioned the first draft of the periodic table while snoozing, or if Paul McCartney was actually inspired by Morpheus to compose "Yesterday", the iconic Beatles song. Otto Loewi (1873-1961), the German pharmacologist who discovered the role of acetylcholine in the transmission of nerve impulses, claimed that he first dreamed the critical experiments that eventually led to his Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1936. Would any of these creative accomplishments be less significant had they not been concocted when their authors were asleep?



The case of the hexagonal structure of benzene, first proposed by the eminent German organic chemist August Kekulé (1829-1896) in a paper published in 1865 in the *Bulletin de la Société Chimique de Paris*, is perhaps a little more peculiar. It was only 25 years later that Kekulé, speaking about his seminal contributions to structural organic chemistry at the legendary Benzolfest held in Berlin, disclosed publicly that the original idea for the cyclic structure of benzene was derived from a reverie he experienced in which a snake was biting its own tail (i.e., a vision of the mythical ouroboros). It doesn't really matter if Kekulé's belated revelation was completely accurate, or if the story was embellished over time to enhance its pedagogical value. The fact is that Kekulé's chemical intuition and insightful work in the second half of the 20th century has had a profound effect in the development of modern organic chemistry, including the highly scrutinized concept of aromaticity.

Kekulé, who was a chemistry professor at the University of Ghent (1858-1867) when he suggested the correct molecular structure of benzene 150 years ago, was honored with a postage stamp issued in Belgium in 1966. The sesquicentennial of Kekulé's birth in the city of Darmstadt was similarly commemorated by the German Democratic Republic in 1979. Interestingly, both stamps feature the classic structural representation of benzene as cyclohexatriene, with alternating single and double bonds, but unfortunately depict some incorrect interatomic angles for the prototypical aromatic molecule.

In closing, I must confess that I don't know what I will be writing about in my next *Stamps International* note. I am always looking for interesting stories to illustrate with postage stamps so, in my quest for inspiration, perhaps all I need to do is relax and take a nap!

For a brief description of Kekulé's purported dream, see: A.J. Rocke, Angew. *Chem. Int. Ed.* 2015, **54**:46-50.

Written by Daniel Rabinovich <drabinov@uncc.edu>