

The News Magazine of the
International Union of Pure and
Applied Chemistry (IUPAC)

CHEMISTRY

International

March-April 2010
Volume 32 No. 2



112

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Copernicium

Copernicus Honored with Element 112



A Century of pH Measurement
IUPAC as a Science NGO



CHEMISTRY International

The News Magazine of the
International Union of Pure and
Applied Chemistry (IUPAC)

www.iupac.org/publications/ci

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Printed by:

Cadmus Communications, Easton, PA, USA

Subscriptions

Six issues of *Chemistry International* (ISSN 0193-6484) will be published bimonthly in 2010 (one volume per annum) in January, March, May, July, September, and November. The 2010 subscription rate is USD 110.00 for organizations and USD 50.00 for individuals. Subscription orders may be placed directly with the IUPAC Secretariat. Affiliate Members receive *CI* as part of their Membership subscription, and Members of IUPAC bodies receive *CI* free of charge.

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Periodicals postage paid at Durham, NC 27709-9990 and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Chemistry International*, IUPAC Secretariat, PO Box 13757, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-3757, USA.

ISSN 0193-6484

By now, you have seen the logo of the 2011 International Year of Chemistry. It is simple, and for good reason. Chemistry is so many different things and if one tries to brand it to a single image, many chemists will quickly say “that’s not chemistry.” Chemistry today is no longer a simple beaker. It is much more than a molecular model. It is also



more than just green chemistry, or materials, or drug design. It is all of these things and more—a multitude of simple and complex challenges.

The French academician Pierre Potier, once said “la chimie est à la biologie ce que le solfège est à la musique” (i.e., “chemistry is to biology what musical notation is to music.”) One does not need to be a musician to appreciate the relevance of that expression.

So, back to the IYC logo; since it was decided to keep it simple, the chosen logo is just a “C” for chemistry. It looks like the carbon element in the periodic table, and also like a page of a daily calendar, recalling 2011 as the year to celebrate.

I wear the logo as a pin and when asked what it is, I am ready to answer. If my interlocutor frowns at my first answer, I add that C is for Celebrate and also for Curie, as in Marie Curie. After all, in 2011 we will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of her Nobel Prize in Chemistry. I could also say that C is for Curious (aren’t we all?), which works well with the kids and intrigues them. While meeting recently with a colleague from the International Union of Crystallography, I suggested that he claim the C is for Crystals. Crystallographers have good reasons to celebrate: in 2012, they will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Bragg’s Law.

C is for Challenges, for Creativity, or for Changes. Whatever your preference on any given day, there is plenty to Celebrate under the C of Chemistry. If you are a music aficionado like Potier, and if your challenge is to convince others that being a Chemist is a bit like being a Composer, then you know that “Do” in Romance languages is just “C” in English.

Think C and happy IYC planning.

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P.S.: Last month, chemists welcomed a new element to their cherished periodic table while paying tribute to Nicolaus Copernicus’ lifetime contributions to science. Element 112 now has a proper name: copernicium. The name copernicium—don’t forget the “i” in the ending—is consistent with the 2002 IUPAC recommendations on the naming of elements which suggest, for linguistic consistency, that the names of all new elements should end in “-ium”. (*Pure Appl. Chem.* 74(5), 787–791, 2002). Read more on page 16.

Cover: The Nicolaus Copernicus Monument in Warsaw, Poland. Designed by Bertel Thorvaldsen in 1822, the bronze statue of the Polish astronomer was completed in 1830.