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Introduction and Guest Editorial

Melbourne–RACI December Synthesis Symposium

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This special issue of *Molecules* celebrates the Synthesis Symposium held in The School of Chemistry at the University of Melbourne during the first week of December each and every year since 1976. The Symposium is organized jointly by The School of Chemistry at The University of Melbourne and the Organic Chemistry Group of the Victorian Branch of The Royal Australian Chemical Institute (RACI). This special issue of *Molecules* contains papers from the Symposia held in 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003, and I thank the authors for their cooperation and support in putting this issue together. I must also thank our major sponsors Sigma-Aldrich and The RACI Victorian Branch for their long-term financial support and other organizations, including Merck Pty. Ltd., Boron Molecular, Medos, GBC Scientific Equipment, Mettler Toledo, Jomar Diagnostics, Davies Collison Cave, The Australian Journal of Chemistry and CSIRO Molecular Science who, by their involvement, have contributed so much to the continuing success of the Symposium. Professor Emeritus D. W. Cameron has been intimately involved with the Symposium since its inception in 1976 and I am pleased that he has kindly agreed to contribute to this Guest Editorial.

Melvyn Gill
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Shortly after completion of the latest annual Synthesis Symposium (the 28th) seems a good time to outline some of the features that have led to these meetings being well supported by chemists from the Melbourne area and other parts of Victoria. Perhaps the most important is that successive organising committees have wisely interpreted the title word 'synthesis' so broadly as not to exclude any area of organic, physical-organic or bio-organic chemistry from involvement. And, as one-day events, the symposia hardly represent a heavy time commitment for most would-be participants. So, over the years, there has been a gratifying level of attendance covering local institutions across the board - universities, government laboratories and commercial operations. As a result, the meetings now represent probably the most effective local forum for a good cross-section of organic chemists to catch up with one another in person and be made aware of what is going on.

My involvement with the symposia, apart from having attended them all, began early in 1976 when, as departmental Chair, I was asked to help institute them. A colleague, the late Dr Geoff Feutrill, was Secretary of the Victorian RACI Organic Chemistry Group at the time. In consultation with others, he had concluded that the idea of just such an annual event was worth implementing. So did I, though mindful that some enthusiastic beginnings fizzle out quickly for want of organisational staying power. I needn't have worried. Successive Group Committees have done themselves proud in establishing appropriate continuity. The pattern that has emerged has led to parallel meetings being established at other Australian centres, covering at different times Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra or Sydney, and allowing overseas plenary speakers the opportunity to address a wider audience overall, than would otherwise apply.

Perhaps not surprisingly, successive symposia have witnessed progressive evolution towards covering a wider range of activities. In the early days, the content was all contributed papers. Nowadays, though still forming the core of the programme, contributed papers are generally buttressed at both ends of the day by plenary lectures. There are posters and trade displays, too. Attendances have increased. We used to regard the benchmark figure as around 100 but in recent times have generally been able to count on registrations being nearer 150, sometimes more. Granted, those are not large numbers by the standards of national or international meetings, but they are very substantial in the context of local research chemistry in Australia.

While some such aspects of the symposia have changed, one other, deliberately, has not. There remains a preference for a good proportion of the contributed papers to involve presentation by graduate students, giving many of them the first, encouraging opportunity for describing their work in a serious, though not too daunting, environment. Students and other young chemists make up a considerable proportion of those attending. Whatever uncertainty I might have felt in 1976 as to the longevity of the Synthesis Symposia, the series is now an ongoing Melbourne institution, fulfilling a valuable scientific function. It gives me personal and professional satisfaction to see it so, and I am most grateful to have been afforded the opportunity of contributing to this special issue highlighting some of its recent activities.

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RACI Synthesis Symposia - Plenary and Invited Speakers 1976–2003

1976	1st meeting	Short contributed papers
1977	2nd	Short contributed papers
1978	3rd	Dr J. E. Pike, Upjohn Company, USA
1979	4th	Professor S. J. Angyal, University of New South Wales
1980	5th	Professor H. Prinzbach, University of Freiburg
1981	6th	Professor W. Steglich, University of Bonn
1982	7th	Professor E. Winterfeldt, University of Hannover
1983	8th	Professor H. Musso, University of Karlsruhe
1984	9th	Professor M. T. Reetz, University of Marburg Professor I. O. Sutherland, University of Liverpool
1985	10th	Professor J. Tsuji, Tokyo Institute of Technology
1986	11th	Professor D. Enders, University of Aachen Professor M. C. Whiting, University of Bristol
1987	12th	Professor R. W. Hoffmann, Philipps-University, Marburg
1988	13th	Professor B. Giese, Technische Hochschule, Darmstadt Professor B. Halton, Victoria University of Wellington
1989	14th	Professor G. Bringmann, University of Wurzburg
1990	15th	Professor G. Helmchen, University of Heidelberg Professor H. Alper, University of Ottawa Professor A. R. Battersby, University of Cambridge
1991	16th	Professor H. Hopf, University of Braunschweig Professor W. A. Denny, University of Auckland
1992	17th	Professor H.-U. Reissig, Technische Hochschule, Darmstadt Dr. M. G. Banwell, University of Melbourne
1993	18th	Professor H. Kesler, Technical University of Munich Professor R. A. Russell, Deakin University
1994	19th	Professor J. Mulzer, Free University of Berlin Professor L. Hegedus, Colorado State University
1995	20th	Professor A. Brossi, NIH and The University of North Carolina Professor D. W. Cameron, University of Melbourne
1996	21st	Professor P. Wipf, University of Pittsburgh Professor I. Ojima, State University of New York at Stony Brook Dr F. J. Leeper, University of Cambridge
1997	22nd	Dr I. Patterson, University of Cambridge Professor K. Feldman, The Pennsylvania State University
1998	23rd	Professor S. M. Weinreb, The Pennsylvania State University Professor N. Miyaura, Hokkaido University

- 1999 24th Professor G. Molander, University of Pennsylvania
Professor C. Chatgililogu, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Bologna
- 2000 25th Professor D. P. Curran, University of Pittsburgh
Professor P. J. Steel, University of Canterbury
Professor C. Forsyth, University of Minnesota
- 2001 26th Professor S. Kim, Korea Advanced Institute of Science and
Technology, Taejon
Professor A. Ganesan, University of Southampton
- 2002 27th Professor M. A. Brimble, University of Auckland
Professor M. G. Banwell, Australian National University
- 2003 28th Professor P. Renaud, University of Bern
Dr J. Palmer, Celera Genomics, San Francisco

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