News from a Nomenclature Resource: Changes at the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry

CSE Style Manual Subcommittee*

Background

The International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) was founded in 1919 by industrial and academic chemists to promote international standardization in chemistry. IUPAC has become the world authority on chemical nomenclature, terminology, and standardized methods for measurement and has used its expertise and influence to foster worldwide communication among chemists in academe, industry, and the public sector.

IUPAC is an association of what are called national adhering organizations which represent the chemists of different member countries. Until now, the scientific work of IUPAC has been accomplished through its 37 commissions, which are arrayed in seven divisions: physical, inorganic, organic, macromolecular, analytical, environmental, and clinical chemistry.

IUPAC's nomenclature books—including *Chemical Terminology, Nomenclature of Organic Compounds, and Nomenclature and Symbols in Clinical Chemistry*—are used by professional chemists in academe, government, and industry throughout the world, not to mention by editors preparing the results of chemical research for publication. IUPAC publishes definitive, up-to-date information on atomic weights and isotopic abundance and a wide variety of other chemical data. It also establishes standard laboratory methods for use in analytical, clinical, quality-control, and research laboratories.

A New Approach

At its August 1999 meeting, the governing body of IUPAC approved a substantial change in how the union will operate. Instead of working through the standing commissions and committees, which are well known for establishing nomenclatural and other standards in chemistry, IUPAC will adopt a system of individual projects. The goals of this change include revitalizing IUPAC's scientific activities, ensuring that only high-quality projects will bear the IUPAC "seal of approval", and optimizing the use of the organization's financial resources.

Under the new organizational structure, funds will be allocated to specific projects, rather than to commissions and committees, so that high-priority projects will be adequately funded and can be started and completed expeditiously. Instead of working through the standing commissions, IUPAC will establish a limited-term task group for each project. Division-level committees will seek out ideas for projects, evaluate the proposals, and manage the approved projects.

As a result of the change in procedure, the number of commissions will probably decline greatly after 2002 and there will be a corresponding increase in the number of short-term task groups. Between now and then, division-level committees are expected to review their overall programs and determine how best to oversee activities and ensure continuity of programs. After 2002, limited-duration commissions may be formed if thought appropriate. Beginning in 2002, there will also be a major redistribution of funds, including the establishment of a central resource pool for interdisciplinary projects.

It is not yet clear how these organizational changes will affect the development and dissemination of standards in chemistry and the work of other bodies, such as the Committee on Nomenclature of the American Chemical Society, that rely on IUPAC's activities as the basis of their work.

For more information about the history, organization, and activities of IUPAC and to find out more about the coming changes, consult the IUPAC Web site: *sunsite.sut.ac.jp/coll/iupac/index.html.*

**The information in this article is based on material produced by IUPAC and available at its Web site:* sunsite.sut.ac.jp/coll/iupac/index.html.