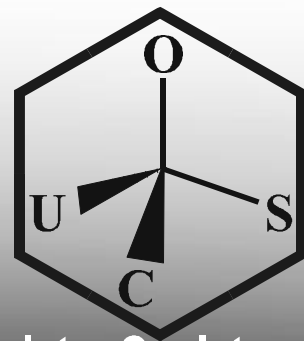


May 2000

Touch-Paper



The Newsletter of the Open University Chemistry Society

The Times, They Are A-Changing

One thing you cannot accuse the OU of—despite its image of 1960's maths nerds with kipper ties presenting black and white TV programmes—is being behind the times.

As well as keeping up with technology—computer mediated conferencing, CD-ROMs, etc. they try to respond to student demands.

Two of the points about which students have been most vocal over the years are..

The perceived difficulty of two 30 point courses compared to a 60 point course.

Very dipolar views on Summer Schools—some wanting them compulsory, others wanting them abolished.

Some of you will have spotted that the Physics department has already replaced their two 30 point second level courses, S271 and S272, with a single, 60 point, course—S207.

Well, from 2002, the Chemistry department will follow suit. S246 and S247 will be replaced by a single course—S205. This 60 pointer will combine organic, inorganic and physical chemistry.

The new course will follow recent trends with a strong IT element—including a CD-ROM with ISIS/Draw on it (I wonder where they got that idea?). And having all the material in a single course will avoid some of the duplication.

But chemistry is a subject that splits very nicely into two distinct areas—organic and inorganic. And many stu-

dents will have studied only one of the two—especially biologists.

In the past a student following a mainly biology based profile would have been able to take 30 points of organic chemistry. From 2002, however, they will have the choice of 60 points of total chemistry, or doing without.

And I'm not sure that students really do prefer 60 point courses. Some people can't afford the time commitment for 60 points a year. Soon it will be impossible for those students to build up a decent degree profile.

S103 may, in the near future, be split into two 30 point courses just to address this problem.

Mark my words—in five years time it will be the perceived wisdom that two 30 point courses are better than a single 60 pointer.

The other change we will see over the next few years is the disconnection of Residential Schools from their courses.

No longer will it be compulsory to attend a Summer School for a particular course. You can choose to do the Summer School or not. You can even choose to do the Summer School in a different year from the related course. These new, disconnected, Summer Schools will each be worth 10 points. However, this will mean that they will involve about 50 hours of work before and after the actual week. They will also involve assessment—normally in the form of a TMA.

Revision Events

Yes, I know it's only May—but it's time to start thinking about revision already.

OUCS run four Revision Events. At each one there will be tutors covering all of the chemistry courses being offered in 2000. In addition the Revision Weekend at York will cover S269, S207 and S281.

The York Weekend runs from 29th September to 1st October and costs from £125 to £155.

One day events will be held on 16th September in Chelmsford and Bristol and on 23rd September in Glasgow. The cost for each of these will be about £35.

Application forms and more details can be downloaded from the OUSA Chem Events conference on First Class. Or from the OUCS Web site on <http://www.geocities.com/oucsweb>.

Alternatively you can send your deposit (£25 for York, £5 for Chelmsford, Bristol or Glasgow) with two SAEs to:

York:	Carole Arnold
Chelmsford:	Frank Hollis
Bristol:	Jan Davidge
Glasgow:	Val Rutherford

All addresses are on the back page of this issue of TouchPaper.

AGM 1999

by Sylvia Jobling, Societies' Rep to OUSA Executive Committee



Chatting after the AGM dinner

I would like to thank you for inviting me to the OUCS 1999 AGM weekend, and what a weekend it was.

I started by looking for folk who looked like OU Chemistry students... and yes! there they were wearing badges. I introduced myself and was met by blank stares.

"Are you from OUCS?" I asked, "No, we are with the Murder Mystery Weekend Group. Are you one of the suspects?"

No, I am with the OUCS, have you seen them?"

They hadn't and wandered off to the bar. The bar! That seemed like a good place to look for an OU Chemistry student. But alas, there were none.

And then I saw a familiar face, Christine Lowe (from Tynemouth). Amazingly I knew Christine, not from OUCS, but through INSET days with our LEA—many a sticky-backed plastic and Fairy Liquid artefact have we made together!

At last we all settled down for the AGM, which was very much what you'd expect an AGM to be. What struck me was the comfortable mix of students and tutors; young, middle aged and older. At the end of the AGM I was presented with a cheque for £403 for OUCS—this money had been raised at raffles at the revision events. Many thanks to OUCS for their generous donation to OUCS.

After the AGM, and a welcome coffee break, the first lecture of the afternoon. **A Stamp Collector's Periodic**

Table by Jim Iley (OU). Not only was this lecture enlightening and educational, but the lecturer was a fellow Geordie (he thinks he's lost his accent, but I pinpointed him as from Jarrow in two minutes). The second lecture: **Mass Spectrometry: Molecules in Flight** by Prof. John Monaghan (U.



Ruth tries to extract a hint from quizmaster Mike Gagan

of Edinburgh). This was equally fascinating and delivered with a lovely Scottish lilt (my second favourite accent).

After a quick rest, shower and change it was time for dinner, and a fine dinner it was too—(with plenty of time between courses for chattering) and the optional wine went down well—well enough to prepare us for **The Quiz** with a hint of chemistry!

At last we were all given badges (I

wish they had done that sooner). Different coloured badges for each team. I was in Jim Iley's team, my husband David (who accompanies me as my helper) was in John Monaghan's team. I think we managed to answer one question each in the entire quiz. Despite this my team came first and we won a great big box of boobos (translation: a great big box of celebration chocolates).

The evening melted into the small hours into the small hours with chatting and jokes and finishing off the wine. David and I retired regretfully just after midnight (it's a long drive home tomorrow). Note in my diary—*Clocks Back—Thankfully!*

Sunday morning arrived in what seemed like the blinking of an eye. A fine breakfast prepared us for the President's lecture. Ruth Williams' talk about a piece of cloth, entitled "Absorption" was truly absorbing. It was very much

concessions of her [misspent] student youth. (Just as well her children weren't there to listen). Ruth was presented with a lovely bowl at the end of her lecture—I thought it was lovely—she thought it was lovely too—it matched the others beautifully.

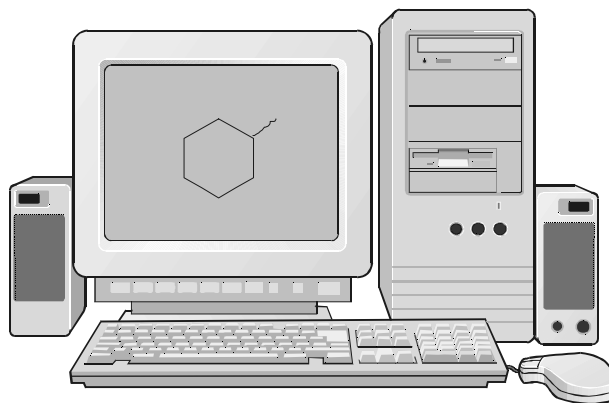
Finally it was time for farewells—some folk

headed for home and other visiting the Black Country Museum, but the prospect of a 200 mile drive home and up for school on Monday morning made that impossible.

The OUCS AGM weekend is an example of the OU at its best—educational, friendly and fun. The date of the next AGM is the 4th and 5th November 2000. Put it in your diary now and be determined to go. It will be worth it.

Chemical Computing

By Frank Hollis



OUCSWEB Update

There have been some changes to the OUCS Web site. Firstly—it's moved.

The new address is

<http://www.geocities.com/oucsweb>

Which should be easier to remember than the old address.

The other major change is the addition of a new page with links to the online bookshop amazon.co.uk. We've decided to add these links because of the Amazon Associates program. Every time you buy something from Amazon using one of our links OUCS earns a percentage of the money you spend.

This means that you can take advantage of Amazon's huge list of titles and reasonable pricing while earning money for the ChemSoc at the same time. The prices are the same however you access Amazon—but using our links sends some of the money to OUCS.

The Diary should also be more up to date, now that Kathy Yeowell is doing the updates.

The Funnies Corner

Terence Woolard of Ipswich spotted this on the ACS Web site...

On a train to a large convention there were a bunch of engineers and a bunch of chemists. Each of the engineers had a train ticket. The group of chemists had only ONE ticket for all of them. The engineers started laughing, figuring the chemists were going to get caught and thrown off the train. When one of the chemists, the lookout, said "Here comes the conductor", all of the chemists went into the bathroom. The engineers were puzzled. The conductor came aboard, said "tickets please" and got tickets from all the engineers. He then went to the bathroom and knocked on the door and said "ticket please". The chemists stuck the ticket under the door. The

Chemistry Macros - A problem solved?

Last time I spoke about the problems I'd had trying to register Pascal Dietzel's Chemistry Macros. Well he finally got in contact with me just a few days after TouchPaper came out.

If you're trying to register the program then you'll need his new email - dietzel@jansen.mpi-stuttgart.mpg.de which should be OK for a while.

I'm trying to persuade Pascal to come to some arrangement whereby OUCS members can register the program through the Society—rather than having to go to the hassle of sending Eurocheques to Germany.

ChemDraw—Free Offer

Although most OUCS members will have taken advantage of the free ISIS/Draw CD (See box) there will be some people who either prefer Chem-

conductor took it and moved on. A few minutes later the chemists came out of the bathroom. The engineers felt really stupid.

On the way back from the convention, the group of engineers decided that they would try that method, too. They bought one ticket for the whole group.

They met up with the chemists in the same car.

Again, the engineers started snickering at the chemists. This time NONE of the chemists had tickets. When the lookout said, "Conductor coming!", all the chemists went to one bathroom and all the engineers went to the other bathroom.

Before the conductor came on board, one of the chemists left their bathroom, knocked on the engineers' bathroom, and said "Ticket please."

And from the same source—

Draw or who need to use it to be compatible with others.

Cambridge Software are allowing free download of ChemDraw 4 (limited version) for home use. Head on over to <http://www.chemstore.com/coupon.cfm> and enter the code free0502 in the form.

It's still not as good as the ISIS offer (it's an old, limited, version of ChemDraw) but it's worth having a look.

The OUCS CD

New members may not be aware of the fact that OUCS have put together a collection of chemistry related software on a CD-ROM.

The star program is ISIS/Draw - which is essential for any chemistry student who uses a word-processor to produce their TMAs.

The CD-ROM costs £5, including P&P. For your copy send a cheque, payable to OUCS, to Frank Hollis (address on back page).

A mathematician, a chemist, and a biologist were asked to prove or disprove, by example, that all odd numbers are prime.

Mathematician: 1 is prime, 3 is prime, 5 is prime, 7 is prime, 9 is not prime -- disproved.

Chemist: 1 is prime, 3 is prime, 5 is prime, 7 is prime, 9 is not prime, 11 is prime, 13 is prime, 15 is not prime, 17 is prime -- I only had to throw out two data points -- It's proven.

Biologist: 1 is prime, 3 is prime, 5 is prime, 7 is prime, 9 is prime.

Finally...

Q. Why did the white bear dissolve in water?

A. It was polar.

Who's Who in OUCS

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Open Day - Volunteers Needed

June 24th, 2000. Put that date in your diary now. It's time for the biennial OU Open Day at Walton Hall.

Once again the chemistry department will be putting on a grand show for visitors. And, once again, OUCS members will be playing a vital part in helping out.

The more members we can get to help - the less work each member has to put in. Most of the work will involve manning a stall, or display. Anything from making molecular models with sweeties or ice cream with liquid nitrogen, to helping with the masses of little (and not-so-little) kiddies desperate to get their allocation of home-made slime.

And it's not just the chemistry department that put on a show. Have a



look at the work being done by other groups within the University, check out some fantastic stuff they're doing with computers, ride in a hot air balloon and much more. So why not bring the whole family along for a very enjoyable day?

If you are planning on coming along - and you can give up an hour during the day - then please let Janet Smith (address above) know. She'll then be able to set up a rota.

Footie fans will be pleased to hear that FIFA have taken our pleas to heart. If England do manage to get through the first round of Euro2000 then they'll be playing on the evening of June 24th.