

# Farewell

“ChE is what ChEs do.” We all have heard this saying, but in the past 10 to 15 years it has become hard to determine exactly what it is that chemical engineers do. The explosion of work from a central core made inroads into too many areas for anyone to remain reasonably familiar with all the strands.

There used to be a time, in the 1960s and early 1970s, when a well-educated chemical engineer could be quite familiar with all aspects of the profession. This did not happen by accident. The very first issue of the *AICHE Journal*, in March 1955, reproduced on the far left of the cover of this issue, represented a convergence—an attempt to capture the research of the day. Three short essays by B. F. Dodge, the President of the AIChE, F. J. Van Antwerpen, the Secretary of the AIChE, and Harding Bliss, the Editor of the newly launched *Journal*, prefaced the issue. The decision to serve as a focal point was not taken lightly. “The new venture, however, was not undertaken without a great deal of debate and some misgiving about the future...”, said the President Dodge; “...enterprises such as this are always acts of faith,” echoed the Secretary Van Antwerpen. The word “theoretical” appeared in all three pieces and defined the aim of the newly launched *Journal*: “...to cover the more highly technical and theoretical phases of the profession.” The arrow of progress was spelled by Editor Harding Bliss, “...as the theory of today becomes the practice of the future.”

We are now in what then was the future. And we can look back. There was a time when chemical engineers published a significant part of their best work in classical ChE journals: *AICHE Journal*, *Chemical Engineering Science*, *Industrial and Engineering Chemistry*, among others. And, for a while, this worked beautifully. But as the palette (the tools and techniques) and the canvas (the new areas) expanded, we discovered that we could contribute to many nontraditional areas. At the same time, new journals appeared and chemical engineers started publishing steadily in high-impact publications. Nowadays, it seems as though there is something from a chemical engineer in every other issue of *Science*.

It was against this background that we launched the *Perspectives* series of *AICHE Journal* in October 1999. Journals publish a subset of what they receive. We decided to turn the tables around; most articles would be commissioned. We said, “This issue represents a new beginning for the *AICHE Journal*... We ...added a new section called *Perspectives*, which debuts in this issue. Several reasons have motivated the introduction of this new section.... The goal of the *Perspectives* section is to inform and reinforce the center of a vibrant discipline that has rapidly moved in many outward directions. This section is intended to publish articles that point the way, identify emerging opportunities, and provide overall perspectives about areas of interest to all chemical engineers. The objective is to offer our readers lively articles that stimulate, educate, and are easy to digest—something that can be read in one sitting...*Perspectives* articles will be written by both academic and industrial authors, addressing themes of the *avant garde* and the traditional. Occasionally we will look outward, where challenges and opportunities may lie—bio-informatics, green processing, global warming, etc.”

We kept our promise. We published nearly 80 *Perspectives* on topics ranging from bio-informatics, green processing, and climate change to microfluidics, multiscale-modeling, ionic fluids, fuel

cells, magnetorheology, control of biomedical processes, combinatorial methods in material science, separations, membranes, energy, systems biology, uses of nuclear magnetic resonance, and product design. Occasionally, we veered into topics of policy debate: the pluses and minuses of the hydrogen economy, clean coal technologies, near term energy challenges, the issue of oil peaking, and the development of chemical engineering in Asia. Some *Perspectives*—represented on the right of the cover of this issue—gave a glimpse of distinctively new areas created by chemical engineers: R. Langer, Biomaterials: Status, Challenges and Perspectives, 46, 1286-1289 (2000); and D.A. Edwards, Delivery of Biological Agents by Aerosols, 48, 2-6 (2002). Many others could have been singled out. In the interim we hit the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue. In fact, the major interruptions in the string of *Perspectives* were commissioned reviews, such as a view of mathematics in chemical engineering (at the center of our cover). I remain impressed by the depth of talent among our profession's practitioners and the amazingly varied landscape explored by chemical engineers. Together, we have barely scratched the surface. Repetitions in topics and authors were virtually nonexistent in a time-span of seven years.

I appreciated the freedom and support given to me by Stan Sandler, the current editor of the *Journal* and by Matt Tirrell, the editor when the *Perspectives* venture was launched. The series is in able hands. I will be succeeded by Pablo Debenedetti. I hope that he will enjoy the scouting and learning as much as I did.



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