



Combinatorial Chemistry in the Commercial Jungle

Looking for sites on combinatorial chemistry on the web, you will soon get a pleasant surprise. The leading portal sites, as they claimed to be, merged in May 2000 to form a new portal site at www.combi-web.com. We took a closer look at the site of this consortium, which offers you a free monthly newsletter.

The first link leads to the site www.combichem.net. The site is laid out in two text columns. On the left, you can find business information on combinatorial chemistry, including press releases, news, mergers, and more. The news is frequently updated and offers a good insight into company and venture capital activities. On the right, you can read about new products. This site is obviously intended for people with commercial interests and offers support in watching the market. The site is loaded

with blinking adverts, and the overall design is poor.

Since our own interests were focussed on research, we tried a second site: www.5z.com/divinfo, which is associated with the home page of Molecular Diversity, one of the first printed periodicals on combinatorial chemistry. The site offers access to article lists, patents, links, company activities, and many more. The lists are open to submissions from the community. Unfortunately, you cannot search the thousands of entries—except with the search function of your browser. What good are such open sites? A complete overview will only be found in commercial offers or from review articles. Some kind of quality control on the site would be desirable. Unfortunately, the link to job offers currently directs you to electronic pie in the sky. We enjoyed the fun section very much, although it is not very recent.

Hoping for the best, we turned to www.combichemlab.com. The menu page offers a portal to a wide range of products and business news. As opposed to the combinet site, information is presented in an optically appealing form. Products are grouped according to applications, and they are not restricted to a few novelties. The market overview is only partial and the selection criteria are not transparent.

Going on to www.combinatorial.com, we found a companion site to Barry Bunin's book on combinatorial chemistry. You can access the table of contents and the references, which have not changed much since the book was published in 1998.

Taken altogether, our web expedition did not yield a very satisfying result. The sites we reviewed were not suited to giving the user unbiased information on combinatorial chemistry. Unfortunately, the fine idea of combining several sites into one portal is compromised by impertinent self-advertising.

Suggest a web site or submit a review:
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We hope that there will soon be a forum that is independent of individual business interests and gives an overview of activities in combinatorial chemistry. Business aspects should definitely be prominent as well, but should stick to quality standards. An international combinatorial chemistry society could be a good support for such a site. The foundation of such a society in Europe is on the horizon. Its members should be encouraged to invest in a better presentation of this young discipline on the web.

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