

Preface

In 1835 Berzelius formulated the concept of catalysis based on experimental data accumulated using platinum metal and acids to induce chemical change. In only the past dozen years, Catalysis Letters has become a repository of knowledge in catalysis science and technology (the first issue was published in January 1988). It has been my privilege and pleasure to participate in the development of this central field of science as a researcher, educator, and the founding co-editor of this journal.

Since its beginnings, research in catalysis produced new science continuously, most recently on the molecular level. New molecules are being synthesized, some of which have turned into life-saving drugs or polymers with unique mechanical properties. The focus of research is shifting from catalytic activity to catalytic selectivity. The separate fields of heterogeneous, enzyme, and homo-

geneous catalysis are merging, and environmental catalysis processes in air, water, and soil demand increasing attention. Catalyst-based technologies proliferate, and the products they yield create wealth on an unprecedented scale and greatly improve both the quality and span of human life.

This review of heterogeneous catalysis in a historical perspective by Professor Wyn Roberts is a special issue of Catalysis Letters. It aims to reflect on the development of this field of science and to honor and stimulate its practitioners and students who continue to strive toward a deeper understanding of the endless possibilities of catalysis.

Gabor A. Somorjai
University of California, Berkeley
Department of Chemistry
May 19, 2000

