

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JOHN K CRUM

IN 1964, WHEN I CAME TO WORK AT the American Chemical Society, Americans were being drafted for the Vietnam War and black voters were being registered during “Freedom Summer” in Mississippi. The Berlin Wall went up and the Beatles arrived in the U.S. And during that amazing year, one prediction I would not have made was that I would celebrate the Society’s 125th anniversary in my present capacity. It is, however, an honor to be able to do so.

Anniversaries prompt us to reflect on the past, and this special edition of *Chemical & Engineering News* is expertly designed to help each of us do just that. Let me offer a personal perspective on some of the historic achievements I’ve seen firsthand.

The current shake-up among dot-coms is sobering evidence of just how unusual it is for an organization to endure as long as ACS—let alone prosper. All around us, other professional societies have flat or shrinking numbers of members. In contrast, ACS enrolled its 100,000th member just one year after I joined the staff, in 1965. Since that time, our membership has grown more than 60%, to make us the largest scientific society in the world, with more than 163,000 chemists and chemical engineers. Today, our retention rate is more than 94%, the envy of other professional organizations—an accomplishment I attribute to our concomitant growth in meeting attendance, member services, and recognition programs.

Our growth has been accompanied by a growing ability to impact the world at large. In the 1960s, we refocused our public affairs efforts to inform and advise public officials on behalf of chemistry. Today, that effort results in more than 10,000 letters from our members to Congress, helping to achieve up to 15% increases in federal research budgets last year. In just the past five years, we’ve mustered some 33,000 scientists to volunteer in their communities during National Chemistry Week, an effort that has reached

Americans in all our local section communities with positive messages about our profession. More than 1 million high school and college students have learned chemistry the ACS way by using textbooks we’ve produced since 1988. We’ve advanced the education of more than 1,000 minority and disadvantaged chemistry students by raising or contributing nearly \$6 million through Project SEED and the ACS Scholars program, just in the past decade. Our flagship *Chemical & Engineering News* is the leading newsmagazine of the global chemical marketplace, with a circulation five times the size of its nearest competitor and advertising revenues that have grown 59% in the past five years.

Perhaps most dramatic of all have been the changes in how we present and share the intellectual capital of our profession. When I first came to ACS, we relied on typewriters and “snail mail” to submit, review, edit, and produce peer-reviewed journals. In search of citations, we walked to libraries where *Chemical Abstracts* took up yards of shelf space.

Today, the World Wide Web offers the best view of how we have been able to dramatically change the pursuit of research in all branches of chemistry. Scientists who subscribe to our journals now download articles more than 9 million times each year, and the Web allows them to access that research weeks before the articles appear in print. As a result, researchers and companies the world over can, in turn, speed the creation of pharmaceuticals, food flavorings, paints, and new materials for cars and clothes. Soon they will be able to explore more than a century of research published by ACS on the Web, among the first digital research archives from a major scientific publisher—**COMMITMENT** including our *Journal* **Despite many of the American Chemical Society, the single most cited journal in ACS remains the field of chemistry. Scientists can now move seam-** **changes over the years, profession of chemistry.**

lessly from a citation or reference to its source, thanks to Chemical Abstracts Service’s online products, which offer searches of the world’s largest databases of chemical information, from journal and chemical patent abstracts to the registry that identifies all known chemical substances.

The 35 charter members of ACS viewed its chief benefit as scientific fellowship. Much has changed over the years, but not that. This tribute to the Society’s 125-year history demonstrates that, despite the many changes we’ve experienced, we remain committed to the people, the process, and the profession of chemistry. It is a special pleasure to celebrate all that with all of you.

ACS
125
YEARS

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