

Letter from the Editor

End of an Era?

The Chemical Industries' Future

Chemistry dominated much of the 20th century's discoveries and developments, both from a scientific and economic perspective. The chemical industry profited from growth in America and Europe. As GDP growth and chemicals demand in the "industrialized countries" is nearly stagnant, Asia is currently in the focus of investments and growth opportunities. But what follows afterwards? What are the long term options and opportunities of the chemical industry?

Many people already call the 21st century the "century of biology". What does this mean for chemistry and the chemical industry? Is chemistry an antiquated field? Definitely the industry and its techniques will change dramatically. But, have there ever been times when this was not true?

Does this mean that the era of chemistry is ending? Will other technologies take over? The answer is Yes and No. Biological methods – a broader term than "biotechnology" – will change especially the production and availability of many chemicals. However, the need for chemicals, regardless of their source, will always remain the same. In some countries it may even rise. The question is: Which companies will be able to adapt to these new processes? And which companies can develop new chemicals to satisfy new demands? Surely, and that will be one of the mayor problems for many chemical firms, the processes will change from classical chemical synthesis to combined interdisciplinary or purely biological methods. Chemistry will become more divers. Companies have to open their minds and people. One of those new emerging fields could be "business chemistry". The era of the "classical" chemistry is ending, but the era of "open" chemistry is about to begin.

In this issue of the *Journal of Business Chemistry* we address some of those questions and problems. A commentary addresses the future developments. The research and practitioners section focus on innovation and IP management and thus how to secure the future of the industry. We thank all authors and reviewer for their contributions and especially Nathalie Sick for her help in the editing process.

Now enjoy reading the first issue of the *Journal of Business Chemistry* in 2006. If you have any comments or suggestions, please send us an e-mail to contact@businesschemistry.org.

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