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## EDITORIAL

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In the early nineties, combinatorial chemistry started to claim a role in drug discovery and agrochemical research as a novel, efficiency-driven approach. Ever since, combinatorial chemistry has not only expanded its scope (e.g. into more technical areas), but it has also strongly consolidated its measurable value. It became a key methodology for organizing the logistics and executing the preparation of a multitude of useful compound libraries. Today, combinatorial chemistry is a well-recognized discovery tool, which has earned its place in all leading research organizations. The term 'combinatorial' is usually understood, for good reasons, in a very broad, all-embracing sense, thus including 'parallel' processes as well.

This issue of CHIMIA reflects, to some extent, the variety of topical activities, which are presently 'in the works' in Switzerland and its immediate proximity. Far from being a comprehensive account, this is a 'snapshot' impression, from which we deduce that plenty of commitment and creativity is flowing into combinatorial chemistry these days. The progress achieved in this field is proven not only by literature reports on the identification and optimization of novel and useful molecules, but also by the creation of new companies, which base their core competence and business strategy on combinatorial chemistry and the technologies around it. The articles presented in this issue indicate how varied the pursued approaches can be, depending on the addressed objectives. The early days of searching for 'the best way' to practice combinatorial chemistry are over, and it has become clear that many approaches are justified, if they possess a distinct, well-defined profile of strengths and weaknesses. While lab automation, logistics, and emphasis on experimentation are intimately linked to combinatorial chemistry, scientific solidity, intellectual creativity and quality-oriented work have reaffirmed their fundamental role as indispensable success ingredients.

It is the essence of combinatorial chemistry to interface with other discovery disciplines, such as, for instance, drug design, assay technologies, medicinal chemistry, informatics, etc. It has been well accepted amidst these 'sister technologies' and there are good reasons to think that the 'anxiety' of defining the role of combinatorial vs. 'traditional' chemists has finally subsided. Fortunately, the developments in recent years have shown that the boundaries for this distinction are more and more blurred. 'Traditional' chemists are more prone to adopt parallel processes, and combinatorial chemists are cautiously designing their libraries, thus de-emphasizing the mere numeric output.

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