

## Editorial



Charles Darwin was born in 1809 and he published his fundamental book, 'On The Origin of Species by Natural Selection' in 1859. Thus this year is a double centenary of an ingenious man and his book, which arguably put forward the most influential idea in the natural sciences in modern times.

When new scientific ideas are proposed, they often have a difficult start and need support. This was also the case with Darwin's thesis. Several enlightened friends and colleagues feared that it might be overlooked. Thomas Huxley founded the X-club with eight (!) congenial friends in 1864.

Despite the small number of members the X-club was very influential and fought successfully for the acceptance of the theory of evolution. This sounds reassuring, but the fight is still ongoing. Even today, 150 years after the publication of the 'Origin of Species', and probably hundreds of thousands of scientific and pseudoscientific publica-

tions, a substantial proportion of the European population is sceptical towards Darwin's evolutionary theory. Although Darwin's theory in many aspects influences our thinking up to the present day, there is another topic, which also influences us daily: the financial crisis. The sheer scale of the losses forces us to check the meaning of words like 'trillion', which in the US means  $10^{12}$  and we can only hope it will not become necessary to use it in its German meaning. The Ivy League universities declared huge losses in the US and some of them, probably for the first time, have to economize (*NZZ*, March 20, 2009, p. 9).

Fundraising within the SCS Foundation is not an easy task either under these circumstances.

There have been many explanations put forward for this world economic crisis, which is already very suspect in itself. An original proposal for the cause of the financial happenings has been put forward by Felix Salmon and consists of the incorrect and reckless usage of a mathematical equation for risk estimation (*Magazine Wired*, March 2009; *NZZ*, March 18, 2009). This might not be the whole truth, but it is interesting and tempts one to paraphrase Bismarck's remark on generals and war: the financial system is much too important and complicated to leave it up to bankers and investors. This is obviously true for many aspects of our life, our planet, our environment. Only the very best education of the coming generation will be good enough to solve the global problems of mankind. The SCS is actively participating in this effort.

The traditional Fall Meeting of SCS is an event where young scientists come together to discuss their work, where awards for excellence are given, where, in most cases, a young scientist presents his or her results for the first time in public. The SCS Fall Meeting has been for many decades part of the basic training in the curriculum of chemistry students. Once again nearly 500 contributions were presented in a well-organised atmosphere on the Irchel campus of the University of Zurich. This was possible, already for the fourth time, thanks to the hard work of a group at the Inorganic Chemistry Institute; my special thanks go to Dr Ferdinand Wild.

This time we had three Dr. Max Lüthi prize winners: Caroline Emery, Pitt Allmendinger and Daniel Mesitschek; all of them from different universities of applied sciences acknowledged for their excellent bachelor diplomas.

In this issue, contributions from Daniel Mesitschek and the SCS Poster Prize winners listed below are presented.

The Werner, Grammatikakis-Neumann and Paracelsus Prize winners, together with the winners of the SCS-Mettler-Toledo prizes for best oral contributions will be acknowledged in the next CHIMIA issue.

### Winners of the SCS Prize for Best Poster Presentations

Andrea Amantonico	ETHZ	Tobias N. Hoheisel	ETHZ
Jan C. Brauer	EPFL	Karine N. Ioset	UNIGE
Isabela Czekaj	PSI	Silke Johannsen	UZH
Roman S. Erdmann	UNIBA	Gabriele Meloni	UZH
Derik K. Frantz	UZH	Leo Merz	EMPA
Marco Furlan	ETHZ	Anna K. Renfrew	EPFL
Ana Hernandez Rendondo	UNIBA	Catherine Schütz	EPFL

In the name of the SCS I congratulate all of the prize winners. The prizes are recognition of a scientific work and also an encouragement to continue after the first successful beginnings.

With best regards

Georg Fräter  
President of the Swiss Chemical Society

Schwand, 2009, March 29