

Kemisk Ordbog

A Danish handbook of IUPAC nomenclature has been authored by the Nomenclature Committee of the Danish Chemical Society. Dr Ture Damhus, Principal Scientist at Novo Nordisk A/S, Member of the Nomenclature Committee, writes:

Just before Christmas 1996, a book was published in Denmark which aims to become the source of IUPAC nomenclature rules for everyone interested in expressing chemistry and chemistry related matters in a consistent way in Danish.

The Nomenclature Committee of the Danish Chemical Society was revitalized a few years ago and took on the responsibility for providing a comprehensive reference document for chemical nomenclature in Danish, something which had not really existed before. The basic idea was to translate loyally the newest IUPAC rules so that, in principle, the only thing we would have to do was to change the names of elements and parent compounds into their Danish counterparts.

The task was not entirely trivial, however. The *spelling* of chemical names has been the subject of heated debate in Denmark, on and off, since the days of the late Prof. K.A. Jensen (known in IUPAC circles from his period as Chairman of the Commission on Nomenclature of Inorganic Chemistry and for his broad interest in all chemical nomenclature issues and in linguistic matters in general). Prof. Jensen argued that the spelling in Danish should be as close to international (i.e. English) spelling as possible whenever the chemical names were the same, whereas his opponents—including *Dansk Sprognaevn*, an official body given the authority to decide on correct spelling in Danish in general—insisted on a traditional Danish spelling. Examples under debate included: calcium/kalcium; chlor/klor (for chlorine); chrom/krom (for chromium); ether/aeter; iod/jod (for iodine); methyl/metyl; phosphor/fosfor (for phosphorus); phenol/fenol; quinin/kinin (for quinine). Also, certain elements had special Danish names.

Interestingly, when starting our work on *Kemisk Ordbog*, we found that, in practice, the debate about the spelling and choice of element names had been resolved quietly by two very influential sectors of the chemical community. One, Danish gymnasium (high school) teachers had decided on the international spelling when writing completely new series of textbooks in connection with a restructuring of the school system around 1990—textbooks that were not likely to be re-

placed for many years. The other area where a clear stand had already been taken in the 1980s, with the spelling debate still raging, was in administration dealing with environmental and occupational health and safety laws, i.e. laws regulating the use of chemicals and thus encompassing extensive lists of names of chemical substances.

With official laws and educational text books formulated with international spelling, it was quite clear that we also should go for this choice in the new nomenclature book, and so we did.

It must be said that there were other problems unrelated to internal Danish quarrels. Merging the recommendations of all the available IUPAC nomenclature sources, as we endeavoured to do, is not easy, e.g. prescriptions in the Red Book and the Macromolecular Nomenclature compendium are in a number of cases at variance with those found in the Blue Guide (partly due, of course, to the different publication dates of these various recommendations). Hopefully, we have found reasonable compromises and judged correctly what will become the future IUPAC names in cases of present inconsistency.

Kemisk Ordbog starts with a list of almost 10 000 names of individual chemical compounds and names of structurally defined classes of compounds. The explanations for these entries are corresponding 'Danish IUPAC names' and definitions of the class names in terms of structure, respectively. Trivial names and obsolete spellings and names are included as entries, but the reader is, in principle, always directed from these to IUPAC names.

The second part of the book consists of text chapters dealing with the IUPAC nomenclature rules and also with related subjects such as etymology and principles for constructing INN (International Non-proprietary Names) for drugs.

The third part of the book consists of a number of tables in the spirit of the tables in the Red Book and the Blue Guide, giving the element names, multiplicative prefixes, collections of parent hydride structures, lists of substituent group names and so on.

Nomenklatura Chromatograficzna

A Polish edition of Nomenclature for Chromatography recommended by IUPAC [*Pure Appl. Chem.* 1993, **65**(4), 819] has been prepared by the Commission of Chromatographic Analysis of the Committee of Analytical Chemistry of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Nomenklatura Chromatograficzna, edited by Zygryda Witkiewicza, Edwarda Soczewinskiego & Zdzislawa Suprynowicza, is published by Polski Narodowy Komitet, Warsaw 1996, ISBN 83 901844 4 3.

World Health Organization Publications—Environment

This catalogue provides bibliographic and descriptive information for some 50 WHO publications concerned with the ways in which protection of the environment can promote human health. Publications are grouped according to the following topics: environmental analysis; environmental health promotion; environmental policy; water supply, sanitation; wastewater; air quality; ultraviolet radiation; natural disasters; nuclear power; hazardous wastes; vector control; urbanization; radiation protection; the WHO Environmental Health Criteria series.

Several of these books describe national and international policies intended to protect the environment and the human life it sustains. Others consolidate world knowledge on the best technologies for meeting the fundamental need for safe water and safe methods of waste disposal—whether involving garbage collection in urban slums or the ‘recycling’ of precious water resources. Still others establish environmental standards that can guide efforts to monitor pollution, ascertain the safety of air and water, or protect against exposure to hazardous chemicals and pesticides. In line with WHO policy, the catalogue also features several practical training guides that can help communities understand the links between environmental conditions and health - and take appropriate action.

World Health Organization Publications—Environment, March 1997, is available from WHO Distribution and Sales, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland. Fax: +41 22 791 4857.