

# Secretary General's Report

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The IUPAC Statutes give the Secretary General the responsibility for carrying out the business of the Union, keeping its records and administering the Secretariat. There are many aspects of the organization and management of our operations that fall into these categories and that are currently the subject of intense analysis and discussion. Since reports on those activities will largely be included in the presentations by other Officers, I would like to concentrate here primarily on the Secretariat, which is one of the most visible physical manifestations of the Union and which plays a central role in the smooth functioning of IUPAC.

Since the last Council meeting two years ago, there have been major changes in the Secretariat, as you know. Let me review briefly the reasons for those changes, then describe the current status and plans for the new Secretariat in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, USA (RTP).

*Location of the Secretariat.* IUPAC first established an independent permanent Secretariat headed by a full time professional staff member in 1968. Since that time the Secretariat has been located in Oxford, UK, under the direction of Dr Maurice (Mo) Williams. Two years ago, when I was elected Secretary General at Guildford, I was well aware of the fact that Mo was scheduled to retire in April 1997, that two other long-time senior staff members had recently retired or were slated to retire by 1998, that the fourth professional staff member was potentially interested in other opportunities, and that one of the supporting secretarial staff would also retire in 1998. I also soon became aware of on-going discussions on possible relocation of the Secretariat; certainly this concatenation of personnel loss suggested that this was an appropriate time to consider such a move. Initially I was opposed to a move. With the awesome responsibility for recruiting several new staff members, I was concerned (as were a number of others) that the disruption of a move would be more than IUPAC (and I as Secretary General) could handle. However, over the next few months I completely changed my views, and ultimately the Executive Committee overwhelmingly came to the conclusion that a move to RTP was desirable. There were three factors that influenced me, and I think, the Executive Committee:

- Prof. Albert Fischli (then Vice-President) convincingly articulated the view that IUPAC, as a global organization, should think globally in terms of all its activities, including future locations of the Secretariat. He pointed out that with modern electronic communications, the Secretariat could be located almost anywhere, yet be in instant contact with ac-



tivities in all countries. In keeping with the pace of modern international research and the activities of multinational companies, he advocated that a move of the Secretariat every 10 years or so should be considered to enhance IUPAC's global image.

- As I analysed the activities in the Secretariat and put new information together with my long experience as a Commission Chairman and as Chairman of the Committee on Publications, I became convinced that we could and should introduce major changes in the scope, organization and conduct of the Secretariat's activities. While these could probably be accomplished in Oxford, where we would have the benefit of the experience and dedication of several talented staff members who would remain, there would inevitably be compromises in trying to adapt new methods to an existing organization. I also became convinced that, with careful management and the cooperation of the staff in Oxford, a transition to a new location could be effected without the 'absolute chaos' that some had predicted. (So far, this expectation has proved valid, and I am confident that when the move is completed later this year, we will continue to feel only moderate moving pains.)
- We received three offers of rent-free space: in Paris, Frankfurt and RTP. The first two were very attractive, and we are grateful for the generosity of the Maison de la Chimie and Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker for inviting IUPAC and for offering assistance beyond the well appointed space. Either would have placed the Secretariat in the centre of a bustling metropolis, with many cultural advantages, but with the significant disadvantage of the high salaries and other costs associated with such cities. RTP, on the other hand, is well outside the high costs of downtown New York, Washington and other cities;

salaries, fringe benefits and living costs there are generally well below those of Frankfurt and Paris. RTP is, however, the centre of a major research hub, with 38 000 people employed in research and light manufacturing in the Research Park itself (which includes research laboratories of several major multinational pharmaceutical and electronics companies). RTP is located at the centre of a triangle formed by three major universities—Duke, University of North Carolina and North Carolina State University—and there are many formal and informal scientific and technical interchanges among the organizations in the RTP area. The advantages of this site proved irresistible.

At RTP we have a 10-year, rent-free lease on a 4000 square foot prefabricated building, provided by the Research Triangle Foundation (RTF), a non-profit organization that serves as the developer of the Research Park. Not only has the RTF furnished the building, but they voluntarily spent over USD 20 000 to redecorate the interior of the building for our use. Since the building provides more than enough space for our near-term needs, we have subleased a portion of the building for five years to the *Journal of Endocrinology* for its editorial office, thus bringing in income that should largely offset utility and other related costs.

*A New Executive Director.* Recruiting a successor for Mo Williams presented the next challenge. Not only would we lose Mo's expertise, but we also would lose several long-time dedicated staff members and their collective knowledge of the Union. While many of Mo's talents are irreplaceable, we felt that we had an opportunity to recruit an individual with a suitable background and abilities to lead the Secretariat into its next era.

We advertised widely and received about 70 applications from 10 countries. I am very pleased that Dr John Jost has joined us as Executive Director. After conducting research in basic physical chemistry and spectroscopy, Dr Jost spent 22 years with Unocal (a major international oil company) in research management and administration. He has brought to IUPAC a rich mix of managerial talent, hands-on experience in information technology and wide experience in chemistry.

John has begun to organize the office in RTP, while we continue the Oxford office until the end of September. This arrangement has permitted him to continue routine activities with the Oxford staff while he analyses the operations and prepares to recruit at RTP only the staff essential to the projected modes of operation.

*Basic Functions of the Secretariat.* In addition to the essential functions of the Secretariat related to financial management, record-keeping and general administration, the areas viewed as especially important for the new Secretariat are those relating to communications with IUPAC volunteers, Affiliates and the world-wide

chemistry community. This emphasis on communication makes the Union's electronic communication and publishing activities a central activity of the Secretariat. It is expected that by fall a new site for the IUPAC Home Page will be established in North Carolina with its own domain name. In addition to retaining the current site at the UK Royal Society of Chemistry as a mirror site, we expect to attract other mirror sites in the Asia/Pacific region and Eastern Europe. The Home Page will be developed into a central communication and publication hub for the Union.

Under guidelines developed last year by our Committee on Printed and Electronic Publications (CPEP), preliminary Commission Reports will be disseminated mainly electronically rather than as paper. The electronic version made available for comment will, of course, be clearly identified as preliminary. The electronic format will allow the submission of comments easily and quickly. It is expected that publication of preliminary documents in this fashion will greatly increase the visibility of IUPAC Commission Reports in the chemical community.

In addition, CPEP currently has under review other specific proposals to publish final Commission Reports and Conference Proceedings electronically in conjunction with usual publication in *Pure and Applied Chemistry*. There are also on-going discussions of improvements in the print version of *Chemistry International* with ancillary electronic communications on the IUPAC Home Page. It is planned to begin making *CI* available on the Internet in parallel with the print edition late in 1997 or early in 1998. This should make the content of *CI* more widely available than it is currently and enable it to function better as a method of promoting feedback from the chemical community outside the circle of those directly involved in Union activities.

*New Support Role for the Secretariat.* With economies brought about by relying on information technology, we should require fewer staff members to carry out strictly administrative activities and can recruit professional staff who will be able to give more attention to the needs of our Commissions in carrying out their projects. As part of the concept adopted by the Executive Committee to emphasize a project-driven structure, we will need a better system to help Commissions develop proposals, recruit candidates to serve on Commissions, track projects and provide progress reports. With the full support of the Executive Committee, John Jost is moving carefully to ensure that our routine administration is being handled well, while he determines the staffing needs for implementing this new role. We believe that in the next two years you will see a dramatically transformed Secretariat, which will be able to provide the kind of support that our Commissions need to initiate, carry out and complete important projects in a timely way and to obtain rapid publication of their reports.