

Chemical information
instruction in the USA and
Germany:
Ein Ausländer schaut herein

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Overview

- History and present status of chemical information (CI) instruction in the USA
- New cooperative developments between the American Chemical Society (ACS) and the German Chemical Society (GDCh)
- Status of CI instruction in Germany?

Development of the concept of “chemical literature” as a separate discipline of chemistry. Influences include:

- Rapid increase in the pace and amount of chemical publication, beginning in late 1800’s
- Development of an international bibliographic movement (Otlet, Ostwald), beginning in 1895
- Appearance of the professional librarian, late 1890’s
- Industry demand for chemists with better information skills, early 1900’s

CI instruction in the USA: some history

- 1900-1925: First courses taught, first textbooks written
 - Marion Sparks, Chemistry Librarian at University of Illinois (1911-29); wrote first textbook on CI in 1919
 - M. G. Mellon, Chemistry Professor at Purdue University (1921-1993); Wrote CI text in 1925; New editions in 1940, 1954, 1968, and 1982

CI instruction in the USA: Supporting organizations

- American Chemical Society (ACS),
Committee on Professional Training (CPT):
 - Mandated to support CI instruction in colleges and universities
 - Sets criteria for information competence levels in undergraduate chemical education

CI instruction in the USA: Supporting organizations, cont'd

- ACS Chemical Information Division (CINF):
 - Over 700 members; about 25% of them are librarians
 - Active in CI instruction (CINF Education Committee sponsors local and national programs)

CI instruction in the USA: Supporting organizations, cont'd

Special Libraries Association (SLA) Chemistry Division:

- Current division membership is ~650
- Over 200 of these are in academic libraries
- Active local and national support of CI instruction (*Example: annual 2-day workshop, “Chemistry for the nonchemist librarian”*)

Chemical information instruction: present status

As a result of longitudinal surveys done in 1983, 1994, and 2005, we know that:

- 82% of ACS-accredited institutions now teach CI, either as a separate or a combined course
- Librarians teach solo in 27% of combined courses; in 10% of separate courses
- Librarians now teach with faculty in 33% of all institutions, vs. 28% in 1994
- The number of separate CI courses has declined from 42% to 37%, because of a decline in courses in institutions granting MS degrees

Summary:

Chemistry librarians in America -

- are well supported professionally
- have been active in CI instruction since its inception
- have developed a number of instructional tools to support their teaching activities
- are eager and well-qualified to share their expertise with their colleagues

Eine neue Brücke?

- March 2005 – First meeting of a joint committee of the CINF division of ACS and the CIC division of GDCh. A main agenda item was to “***promote the use and accessibility of CI at academic institutions through jointly developed courses and e-learning***”
- September 28-30, 2005 – second meeting scheduled in Eltville am Rhein
- ...und danach?

Zusammenfassung

- The existence of a new partnership between the CI-centered divisions of the ACS and the GDCH holds the possibility of greater exchange of ideas, expertise and support for CI instruction, not only between the two divisions, but also between the two countries.

CI Instruction in Germany: current status

...[please fill in the blanks!]...

- Opportunity? Do librarians in German institutions of higher learning have many chances to teach CI? In which venues (regular class meetings, seminars, workshops)? What are the chances to team-teach with a Chemistry faculty member?

CI Instruction in Germany: current status

- Interest? Do German librarians who are responsible for chemistry collections have the interest or the time available to be involved in teaching CI? Would such an interest be supported by their administrations?
- Tools? Do German librarians have easy access to the tools of CI – sample curricula, problem and exam sets, descriptions of printed resources, etc.?

CI Instruction in Germany: current and future status

- Effect of the Bologna Accord? Will the introduction of the curriculum reforms as specified in the Bologna accords present an opportunity for librarians to recommend and institute the inclusion of formal CI courses of instruction into the chemistry curricula of their institutions?

Communities of practice in CI instruction

What is a *Community of Practice (CoP)*?

Not to be confused with a team or a task force, a CoP is specifically identified with a particular *practice*. Three characteristics define a practice:

- **Joint enterprise.** Members of a CoP are there to accomplish something on an ongoing basis; the work is their “mission”.
- **Mutual engagement.** Members interact with each other not only to do the work, but also to clarify and further extend that work.
- **Shared repertoire.** Members have not only the work in common, but also share methods, tools, techniques, stories and even behavior patterns

It is my hope to be able to establish a Community of Practice between groups of chemistry librarians in Germany and the USA to promote information literacy in their students by means of effective instructional methods.

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