

Message from President



C3 President Sudhir Abhyankar

The 40th C3 conference held at Grenfell Campus, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Corner Brook in June 2013 was a grand success by all accounts. We had three invited speakers from the U.K, U.S.A. and Canada and this was followed by a number of presentations from chemical educators who have taught chemistry at various institutions around the world. Planning is already underway for the 41st joint C3-CSC Chemical Education division conference in 2014.

We are actively looking for a person to fill the position of President-Elect for C3, as soon as possible. Please consider to nominate yourself or someone you know.
Season's Greetings!!

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40th C3 Conference Memorial University, Grenfell Campus



Organization Team for 2013 Conference



The Bottle Cove day trip participants.



Sudhir presenting to Molly



Sudhir presenting to Stephanie



Tour group at the Tablelands



A snapshot of the delicious lobster feast at the 2013 banquet..

41st C3 Conference BCIT & Simon Fraser University

- **ABSTRACT** submission begins Dec 16, 2013 to Feb 17, 2014
- **Registration** will open in 2014
- **Joint Conference** with the CSC—Chemical Education Division
- Watch the **C3 website** for updates about banquet details and accommodations

Sun, June 1—Thurs, June 5, 2014

Be Chemically Informed Today—Educating students, instructors, and the public

The conference for 2014 is a joint conference with CSC. We will be a part of the Chemical Education program. Having the conference joint will allow you full access to the CSC conference with your registration fee.

Planning Committee

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For updates you can follow the C3 facebook page: <http://collegechemistry.ca/index.html>



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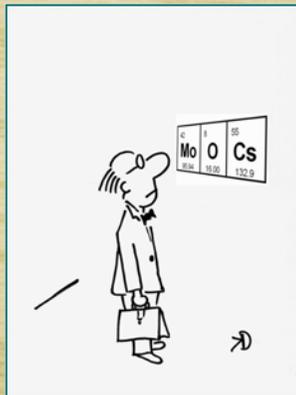
Editor's Note

By all accounts, last years conference was a complete success. Thanks go out to the team of coordinators in Newfoundland for hosting such a fabulous conference. Looking forward to this summer, I anticipate having an equally fabulous conference on the opposite side of the country! This academic year is as busy as always, and even more so for some, so I hope that you can look forward to a meeting of kindered spirits in June. Please don't hesitate to contact the executive if you have questions and keep the newsletter submissions coming. Happy end of the semester to all of you. See you in the new year.

-Arlana

MOOCs and Mayhem

by Dietmar Kennepohl



I have always been fascinated by the incredible amount of hype surrounding MOOCs (massive open online courses). To be sure, the strong social mandate and promise of open knowledge and free education for all is incredibly attractive. It is even more attractive when you couple this with the independence and flexibility of online access, self-directed education, and exposure to exciting new learning environments. The student numbers certainly appear to support this. When Stanford professor Sebastian Thrun (founder of Udacity) opened his computing science course to the world, it racked up more than 160,000 enrollments. This success launched a rapid development of other MOOCs spearheaded mostly by the big three—Udacity, EdX, and Coursera.

Much like the appearance of new educational technologies of the past, the early days of MOOCs had the tone of a serious revolution in learning. MOOCs would shake the very foundations of higher education to the ground, and by 2060 there would only be 10 universities in the world. The solution to education had essentially been found. However, the reality was a little different. Enrollments were high, but course completion rates were less than 10%. MOOCs have also been regularly criticized for their untested financial model, limits around student assessment and course quality; they have

been accused of delivering information rather than education. The big universities leading the craze do not actually give formal credit for participation in MOOCs, which has not gone unnoticed.

In a recent interview, Thrun has moved away from his usual cocky optimism to a more somber view of MOOCs (Chafkin, 2013). "We're not doing anything as rich and powerful as what a traditional liberal-arts education would offer you." His comment around low completion rates was also stunning. "We were on the front pages of newspapers and magazines, and at the same time, I was realizing, we don't educate people as others wished, or as I wished. We have a lousy product." Actually, he later admits never even really liking the term "MOOCs."

When MOOCs first appeared on the scene, the reaction many of my chemistry colleagues had was to ask (1) what exactly a MOOC was and (2) if you remove the teachers, how do the students learn? These are good and sober questions. Leontyev and Baranov (2013) provide an excellent overview of MOOCs and other open educational resources from the chemical education perspective, which addresses the first question. Keep in mind that in the early days senior administrators were really talking up MOOCs without knowing what they were about. It was the latest thing and everyone wanted to get a big bucket of whatever it was for their own institution.

However, the second question is much more interesting. The initial concern was that MOOCs were meant to cut labour costs by replacing faculty, but this quickly morphed into a bigger and better discussion around the role of the teacher. In a world of ubiquitous knowledge, what added value do we provide as educators? Indeed, forcing this question on a generation of teachers may end up being MOOCs biggest contribution to learning. So, setting aside the mayhem we've seen around big business, new technologies and mass media attention, there is an important call to think outside the classroom and lecture hall box to examine and reflect on how we teach. Quite frankly, that's something I can really get hyped up about.

References

- Chafkin, M. (2013). Udacity's Sebastian Thrun, Godfather Of Free Online Education, Changes Course. *Fast Company Magazine*, November 14. <http://www.fastcompany.com/3021473/udacity-sebastian-thrun-uphill-climb>
- Leontyev, A., & Baranov, D. (2013). Massive Open Online Courses in Chemistry: A Comparative Overview of Platforms and Features. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 90(11), 1533-1539.