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Editorial Reflections: A Symphony of p-Block Chemistry

Rory Waterman,^{*,[a]} Jan J. Weigand,^[b] and Robert Wolf^[c]

Journeying back to the early 1990s, p-block chemistry was awaiting transformation – a realm of potential that would flourish over the ensuing three decades. In those days, brilliance abounded, and new results frequently broke the boundaries defined in textbooks. A dance of metastability unfolded, as compounds triumphed against the odds set by conventional wisdom. The field was a tapestry woven with triumphs and tribulations – a symphony of innovation.

As we turn the hourglass of time, a new generation ascended, beholding these achievements, some even etching their names into the annals of discovery. Their pursuit took on distinct forms: a desire to question the chemistry's paradigms and to uncover the practical aspects within the profound. They seamlessly fused their work with the tapestry of life, embedding the essence of p-block elements into energy, materials, sustainability – a resonance that transcends disciplines.

Their legacy ignited a call for us, the successors, to rise to greater heights. In those pioneering steps, they beckoned us, their heirs, to unveil the riches of the main group elements – each discovery, a gem set within the mosaic. To neglect this legacy is to forsake its treasures.

And so, these torchbearers reshaped the 1990s' view, ushering chemistry into the new millennium's embrace. The early 2000s dawned, christened by a revival of the p-block elements. The globe resonated with melodies of reactivity and innovation intertwining. The leaders' symphony resounded, growing in resonance with each passing year.

Yet, a changing of the guard unfolds – a chapter's end, and an overture's beginning. Six figures of inspiration; mentors, and companions – embarking on a journey into the realm of retirement (Figure 1). They did not merely orchestrate main group chemistry's opus; they composed its very notes. Their significance etched indelibly on this grand score.

Evamarie Hey-Hawkins, a luminary of Leipzig, wove catalytic sonnets, expanding phosphorus's lexicon. Compounds birthed from her methods echoed with materials' promise, while her recent inquiries extended to boron's medicinal embrace. **Hansjörg Grützmacher**, a Zurich maestro, composed phosphorus symphonies from elemental preludes. Precursors became reagents, crafting catalytic crescendos that resonated in energy transfer, catalysis, and photoinitiators. **Dietrich Gudat**, orchestrated NMR at Stuttgart, seemed to veer from the traditional script, playing across the p-block building rings and exploring reactivity. Symphonies of heterocycles such as diazaphospholenes and carbene analogues played in all the notes of groups 14 and 15. **Manfred Scheer**, a Regensburg virtuoso, explored the reactive tapestry of group 15, crafting nanomaterial spheres and clusters. His chapters unfolded with elements' dance, resonating in oligomers, polymers, and beyond. **Rainer Streubel**, in Bonn's embrace, orchestrated phosphorus's soft ballet, navigating heterocyclic harmonies. His strains explored aromaticity's secrets, intertwining heterocyclic lore with reaction chemistry's art. **Werner Uhl**, a Münster luminary, breathed life into aluminium's verses, pioneering hydroalumination's rhythms and embracing frustrated Lewis pairs. His symphony of synthesis reverberated, echoed by teaching accolades that touched future minds.

To these six we offer heartfelt gratitude – for notes composed, bridges built, and kinships kindled. Your symphony resonates in the corridors of time.

Retirement dawns – a bittersweet cadence. Colleagues step offstage, yet their melodies linger. In this spirit, this special collection on p-block element chemistry unfolds – a tribute of a global ensemble, celebrating the pantheon of chemistry's innovators.

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Part of a Special Collection on the p-block elements.

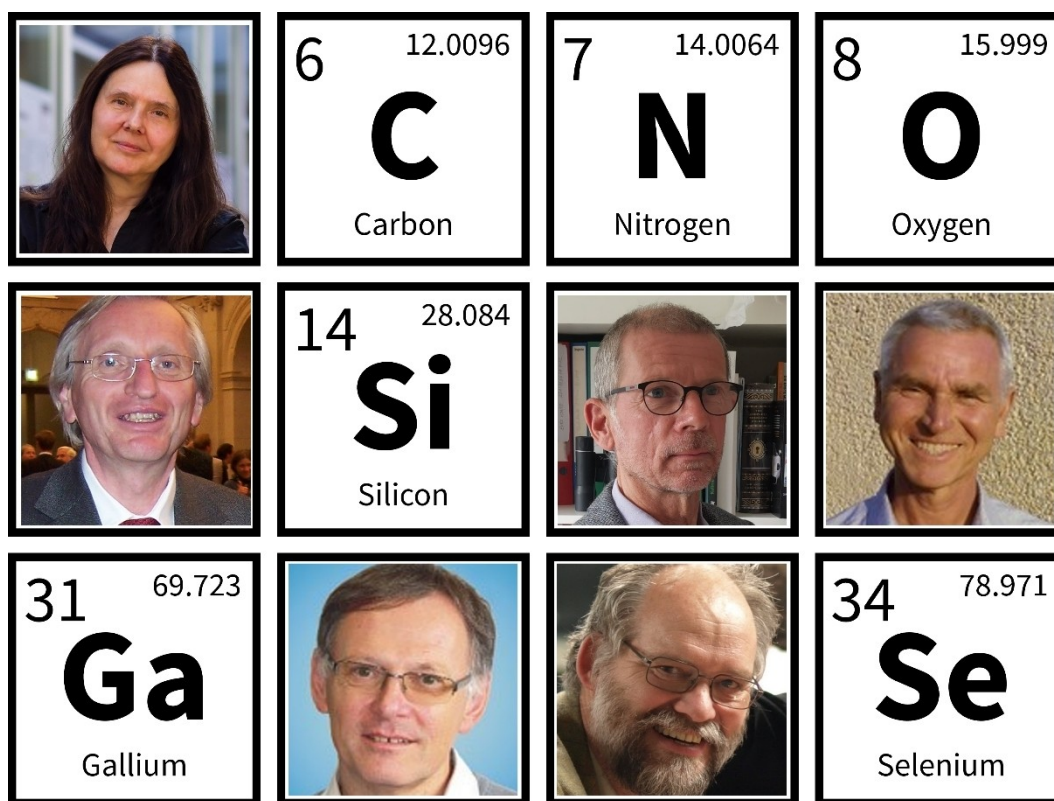


Figure 1. Top to bottom (l–r) Evamarie Hey-Hawkins, Werner Uhl, Hansjörg Grützmacher, Rainer Streubel, Manfred Scheer, Dietrich Gudat.

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