Dear Readers,

With this Special Issue of SYNLETT, we are honoring Peter Vollhardt, who has not only created this wonderful journal but also served as its Editor-in-Chief for over 25 years. As a longtime admirer and, quite possibly, as a distant nephew, it gives me great pleasure to write here a few words about Peter.

Peter was born in Madrid to German parents and grew up in Madrid and Buenos Aires. After moving to Munich, Germany, he obtained his high school degree (Abitur) there and began studying chemistry at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU). Coincidently, parts of his studies were supervised by Johann Mulzer, who was also at LMU at the time and later became my own PhD supervisor. Peter then moved to England and continued studying chemistry at the University College London, where he obtained his PhD in 1972 working with Peter J. Garratt. This interaction must have been rather productive as they published ten papers together on Peter’s studies on biphenylene analogues, including one paper concerning ‘homophthalaldehyde’ that was published in SYNTHESIS. After obtaining his PhD, he moved to California, and he hasn’t left since. Following two years as a postdoctoral fellow in the laboratory of Bob Bergman at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech), he accepted an Assistant Professorship at the University of California at Berkeley in 1974. He quickly moved through the ranks and became a full professor there in 1982. He was also a principal investigator at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory from 1983 until 1987. His fondness of France and everything French has been expressed in his multiple visiting professorships, including at the Universities of Paris XI in Orsay (1979), Bordeaux (1985), Lyon (1987), Rennes (1991), Paris VI (1992), and Marseille (2000). He also spent time at the University of Rome (Tor Vergata, 2004), where he was awarded an honorary PhD in 2004. He has visited Germany twice as a Humboldt awardee.

His research has always focused on synthetic and mechanistic organic chemistry and organometallic chemistry, and their application in the synthesis of natural and unnatural products. Peter is a true pioneer in applying modern transition-metal-catalyzed reactions in natural product synthesis. He recognized, early on, the true power of co-oligomerizations of acetylenes into cyclic products for chemical synthesis. His bold and elegant application of the cobalt-catalyzed alkyne trimerization in a total synthesis of estrone (see Scheme on the next page), published in 1977 only three years after starting his independent career, immediately catapulted him into the cream of the crop in chemistry. Peter Vollhardt also pioneered the phenylene that first became accessible using his methodologies and made ‘energetic molecules’ that could be used in chemical energy conversions, among many other things.
The Inaugural Issue of SYNLETT appeared in September 1989, including Peter’s first SYNLETT article on \( \eta^5 \)-cyclopentadienylobalt complexes that induce the co-cyclizations of alkynes with aldehydes and ketones. Throughout his career, Peter Vollhardt has won several of the most distinguished awards. For example, in 1983 he received the Adolf Windaus Medal of the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen; also in 1983 he was named by Science Digest as one of the ‘100 Outstanding Young Scientists in America’; in 1985 he obtained the Miller Research Professorship in Residence; also in 1985 he received the Humboldt Award; in 1987 he was given the American Chemical Society Award in Organometallic Chemistry; also in 1987 he became an Elected Member of the Organic Division Committee of IUPAC; in 1990 he obtained the prestigious Otto Bayer Prize; in 1991 he won the American Chemical Society Arthur C. Cope Scholar Award; in 1995 he received the Award of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science; in 1996 he was awarded the Prize of the Stiftung Buchkunst; in 1998 he received the National Science Foundation Special Creativity Award; in 1999 he was given the American Chemical Society Edward Leete Award; and in 2000 he was awarded the Medal of the Université Aix-Marseille.

In this Special Issue, many of Peter’s students and friends have contributed beautiful manuscripts, and I am very grateful to all of our authors. Here at SYNLETT, though, we are most grateful for Peter’s installation of SYNLETT as a top journal for communications and accounts in chemical synthesis. His creativity and originality have always been, and will continue to be, highly influential and inspirational to us all. I am glad that Peter with his great experience and sense for originality has agreed to continue editing the Account and Synpacts sections.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Peter on the many remarkable achievements of his life so far. Thank you, Peter!

Ben List
Mülheim, June 2015