

Book Review

Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry. Edited by A.R. Katritzky, C.W. Rees, E.F.V. Scriven. Elsevier, 1996, 11628 pp, hardback. \$ 6348.50. ISBN 0-08-042072-9.

The vital roles played by heterocycles has contributed to the importance of this area of chemistry. The set *Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry* has now been updated only twelve years after the first edition.

When the first edition of *Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry* appeared in 1984 there was a gap between the existing textbooks and the established ongoing series covering specialised topics. The stated goal of *Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry* was to present a comprehensive account of heterocyclic chemistry, emphasising the basic principles and compiling the unifying correlations. It was intended to give an up-to-date overview of the subject as a whole and at the same time to provide enough detailed information to answer specific questions.

These objectives are maintained also for the publication of *Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry II*, a review of the literature 1982-1995. The aim of this new edition is to update the topics treated in *Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry I* and to introduce information on new classes of heterocycles. To keep the two editions compatible, much of the organisation was maintained. However the volume order as well as the position of the chapters summarising heterocyclic ring systems containing the less common heteroelements has been changed. Both changes were made in order to obtain a more logical organisation, using the ring size as only criterion.

Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry II contains 10 volumes with 7743 pages of text compiled by 246 individual authors. Two volumes with 1325 pages are entirely devoted to the indexes. This huge compilation of knowledge is even more impressive if one considers that mainly the results over the period 1982 - 1995 are reported, so only some 20 % of all references cited have been published before 1982. The 9 volume editors and the three editors-in-chief have done a very good job unifying the contributions of the authors.

In view of the sheer size of this new edition it is impossible for a single reviewer to do justice to the complete set. It is clear that depending on the subject and the authors, individual contributions range from reviews of reviews to critical analysis of the state of the art. Finally the chapters where the authors have written already a contribution in the first edition, have a tendency to be an update, enumerating new results without discussing the context. Whereas new chapters or in chapters written by a new author, a complete picture is very often presented. Today the search for information is mainly done with the help of electronic databases. Therefore the importance of compilations of reviews has lost a lot of its importance. However the critical evaluation of a subject is highly valuable. Despite differences in the treatment of various areas, consulting *Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry I* and *II* before starting and while working on a new research project is highly recommended. One always obtains a quick access to a good literature compilation and very often one will be able to profit from the insight of an expert.

Clearly *Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry II* is a must for all chemistry libraries and for all those research groups employing heterocyclic chemistry. Also libraries used by scientists working on biological problems, on natural products or in material sciences should have access to *Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry II*. Therefore each science library should have a copy of the new edition. In view of the rapid development of electronic databases it will be interesting to see what will be the future of *Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry*. Will it become a compilation of reviews of reviews or will it become a compilation of articles critically reviewing the state-of-the-art? Whatever will be the answer *Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry* has for the moment its place and the authors, volume-editors and editors-in-chief should be congratulated for their efforts.

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