

A remarkable chemist and friend

George A. Olah

Jacques-Émile Dubois, Jacques to his friends, was a true pioneer and groundbreaker in diverse fields of chemistry. After World War II, he spent two years as a young man at University College London (UCL) with C.K. Ingold, the leader of the emerging field of physical organic chemistry. During this time, he got involved in measuring rates of fast reactions and studying the mechanistic aspects of the studied reactions. He subsequently continued his fundamental studies in the area of fast kinetics, but also increasingly pursued other interests.

This involved first of all the new and significant field of Chemical Information, which he fundamentally helped to develop. His DARC system (Documentation and Automated Research of Correlations) was a truly pioneering new approach, which fundamentally influenced the conceptualization, representation and handling of chemical information. He was also one of the first to fully use the technology of the evolving computer age in the field. Jacques also greatly contributed to the emerging field of computational chemistry including tackling the challenge of molecular structural problems.

Another area to which he made lasting contributions and whose development he furthered was the modern chemistry of surfaces, interfaces and new materials. The significance of the latter is clearly demonstrated by the 2007 Nobel Prize in Chemistry having been awarded to Gerhard Ertl and by the work of such leading investigators as Gabor Somorjai.

All in all, Jacques was a remarkable chemist and I am proud that I could count myself a friend of his.

This special issue of *L'Actualité Chimique* in honor of Jacques-Émile Dubois is not intended to be an obituary of his contributions and achievements. It demonstrates the present dynamic development and significant ongoing progress in the fields he helped to initiate and to which he contributed so much. In the same spirit, using his career and choices as a backdrop, the issue also discusses lessons obtained from the past and current debates on how to best foster research and innovation.

Jacques-Émile Dubois would have been highly pleased to see how the seeds he helped to sow continue to grow into mighty trees. It is very much in this spirit that his colleagues and friends conceived and dedicate this issue to his memory.



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Jacques-Émile Dubois (1920-2005)