

Get to know our Editor Benjamin List!

Prof. Benjamin List is Editor-in-Chief of SYNLETT since 2015 and SYNFACTS Editor since 2005. His research at the Max-Planck-Institut für Kohlenforschung (Germany) focuses on the development of new catalysis concepts within the areas of organocatalysis, transition-metal catalysis, and, to some extent, biocatalysis. Enjoy his interview!

What fascinates you most about organic synthesis?

B. List: Chemical synthesis, first of all, is an extremely important technology that we need to make the molecules and materials required to live on this planet, for example fertilizers, fuels, catalysts and medicines. But in addition to this, chemical synthesis is also a cultural heritage, very much like art and music, one of the grand achievements of homo sapiens. Most importantly for me though, chemical synthesis is great fun.

What do you think about the future prospects of organic synthesis?

B. List: Despite trends, hypes, and fashions, for me there is little doubt that chemical synthesis will always be needed, certainly in the coming 100 years. There are enough grand challenges around for synthesis to keep generations of chemists busy. Let's tackle these challenges to facilitate a more sustainable life on earth, for example by converting CO₂ and sunlight into fuel, or by hydrogenating nitrogen gas at room temperature.

What should be the role of publishers over the next 10 years?

B. List: Publishers should convert our scientific results that we create in the form of manuscripts into beautiful scientific publications, speedily and accurately, and even further improving the content. Ideally,

they should not only think about how to create revenue but be committed to advancing and improving science.



What advice would you give to young chemists about how to handle stress and pressure during their PhD?

B. List: If you love what you are doing and if you are really enthusiastic about it, stress and pressure will feel like pure joy! Also, do not follow trends, do not aim for papers or recognition, but follow your enthusiasm instead.

Given the chance to meet any chemist (living or dead), who would it be and what would you ask him/her?

B. List: I would like to talk to Emil Fischer and to Linus Pauling. They both have been outrageously original and brilliantly creative scientists. I would really enjoy learning from them but also telling them about the developments in chemistry since their departure.

What's one thing that most people don't know about you?

B. List: I love listening to live classical music, especially romantic piano concertos.