

The Tenth International Conference for the History of Chemistry (10ICHC) of the Working Party on the History of Chemistry (EuCheMS) was held on 9-12 September 2015 at the University of Aveiro, Portugal. The theme of the meeting was “Chemical Biography in the 21st Century”. Biographies—whether in the form of books or articles—have always been an important genre in the history of chemistry. General histories of chemistry have indeed often taken a biographical approach. Many chemists have written autobiographies, which, along with the formal obituaries produced by national academies of science, have formed an important source of information for historians of chemistry. This conference was an opportunity to critically examine how the genre evolved and explore ways in which the biographical approach can be fruitfully employed by historians of chemistry and chemists, especially at a time where manuscript and typed documents are disappearing, and dealing with problems historians can face with the migration to electronic communication where it is also possible to make sources disappear at a button click.

The conference was a successful event, and gathered more than 60 participants from 21 countries and 3 continents. Most participants came from European countries, but there were also participants from USA, Japan, Colombia and Brazil. Even more encouraging was the stronger presence of the younger generation, new faces from countries that were not yet represented and the presence of colleagues from the Division of the Chemical Education.

The program combined keynote lectures and thematic sessions with shorter papers. The opening session at the Fábrica Centro Ciência Viva, Science Center of the Aveiro University, was attended by the Rector of the University of Aveiro, Professor Manuel Assunção, who welcomed the participants, and the President of the Portuguese Chemical Society, Professor Maria José Calhorda, and the key-lecture that followed featured the reputed Portuguese chemist Jorge Calado (Technical University of Lisbon) who gave a lecture entitled “Ghost Science. Writing the history of 21st century science”. In her key-note “Towards a Biography of Carbon at the Intersection Between Nature and Culture”, Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent (University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne) explored how choosing to write a biography of a scientific object might add to the usual narratives in the history of chemistry and get deeper into the specific essence of the science. By asking “Who Doesn’t Get a Biography in the History of Chemistry?”, Michael Gordin (Princeton University) analyzed the reason why certain important figures such as Paul Walden, or Wilhelm Ostwald, as well as other less known but nevertheless crucial actors, are still missing a decent biography.

The remaining part of the two and half days was split into two parallel sessions that hosted 50 papers, concentrated on a wide range of themes, including Translation, Textbooks, Oral and Digital Sources for Recent History, Controversies and Autobiographies, Myths and Misrepresentations, Prosopography, Dictionaries and Sets of Biography, Historiography, Discipline Building, Biography and History of the Laboratory, Biographies and History of Chemical Engineering. The detailed program and conference book can be found at <http://10ichc-2015.web.ua.pt/>

The social programme included visits to the beaches of Costa Nova and Barra, the ‘moliceiro’ ride through the urban channels of Ria as well as the traditional conference dinner, but the high point remained the visit to the Museum of Science, the former

Laboratorio Chimico, the Cabinet of Physics (18th and 19th centuries instruments beautifully preserved) and University of Coimbra, as well as the cellars 'Caves Aliança' and Berardo collection. An extra excursion was made to the Douro region.

