

Fakultät für Chemie und
Pharmazie

 Institute of Organic
Chemistry

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Symposium in Honor of Emil Fischer

During a symposium in honor of Emil Fischer on October 7 the American Chemical Society's Citation for Chemical Breakthrough Award was handed over to a very proud President, Prof. Alfred Forchel. This award recognizes the breakthrough publication of Emil Fischer on the structure of sugars in 1891 and designates the University of Würzburg a historic site of chemistry.

In 2014 the *Division of the History of Chemistry of the American Chemical Society* (HIST ACS) selected Emil Fischer's publication "[Ueber die Conformation des Traubenzuckers und seiner Isomeren](#)" in *Chemische Berichte* 1891, 24, 1836, as one of those scientific advances "that have been revolutionary in concept, broad in scope, and long-term in impact". The [Institute of Organic Chemistry](#) which was contacted by the ACS as the successor institution thus organized a commemorative symposium to celebrate this award.

HIST ACS decided to send two representatives, Dr. Jeffrey I. Seeman (University of Richmond) and Prof. Anthony Barrett (Imperial College London), as speakers, and the President of the University of Würzburg also happily accepted the invitation to join the symposium which was finally held on October 7, 2015 in a crowded lecture hall B in the chemistry center building.

Early in the afternoon, Prof. Frank Würthner, executive director of the Institute of Organic Chemistry, and Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Alfred Forchel, President of the University of Würzburg, welcomed students, faculty members and speakers. The president expressed his gratitude to HIST ACS and also to the Faculty of Chemistry and Pharmacy, which has been demonstrating scientific excellence since the times of Emil Fischer and currently ranks 32nd in the Academic Ranking of World Universities ("Shanghai Ranking").

Prof. Christoph Lambert, dean of the faculty, then gave a short overview of the history of chemistry in Würzburg and Emil Fischer's impact here, and introduced Dr. Jeffrey I. Seeman of the HIST ACS division. Dr. Seeman clearly pointed out that Fischer's work on the sugars was a real breakthrough, and that the award nevertheless is never presented to an individual (who in this case is already deceased) but always to the institution where the discovery was made. With a big smile he added that, in his opinion, the award is more prestigious than any other prize of the American Chemical Society and even the Nobel Prize.

Subsequently, an amazed president received the award plaque from Dr. Seeman and proudly showed it to the audience. He was joined by Tony Barrett and four of Emil Fischer's successors: Siegfried Hünig (director from 1961 to 1988), Gerhard Bringmann (director since 1988), Frank Würthner (director since 2002) and Christoph Lambert (director since 2009).

Finally, two highly interesting lectures were given by the two ACS HIST representatives. Dr. Seeman tried to answer the question "Was Plagiarism Involved in the Development of the Woodward-Hofmann Rules? A Discussion of Responsible Conduct of Research." Prof. Barrett talked about "Recent Advances in the Total Synthesis of Resorcylyate and Meroterpenoid Natural Products."

The symposium ended with the placement of the award plaque in the hallway of the Institute of Organic Chemistry and a poster session for undergraduate students, accompanied by pretzels and beer.

By: C. Stadler

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The President of the University of Würzburg and the successors of Emil Fischer show the award plaque to the audience. (f.l.t.r.: Prof. S. Hünig, Prof. G. Bringmann, Prof. C. Lambert, Prof. F. Würthner, Prof. A. Forchel, Dr. J. Seeman and Prof. T. Barrett. Photo: C. Stadler)



Proud to have been designated a historic site (Prof. A. Forchel with Dr. J. Seeman. Photo: C. Stadler)



Placement of the Award Plaque in the Hallway of the Institute of Organic Chemistry (Photo: C. Stadler)