

# AIChE<sup>®</sup><sub>100</sub>

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## Preface

### AIChE--A Century of Change and Innovation

*By John A. Sofranko*

**T**his book celebrates AIChE's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and documents the incredible evolution of the chemical engineering profession and the Institute. Building on the 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary books (available at <http://www.aiche.org/About/Centennial/Books/Index.aspx>), it focuses on the activities of AIChE in the last 25 years and puts them in perspective to the history of the profession.

During the past quarter century, there have been many important changes and innovations in the chemical engineering profession and the Institute, but none was more impactful than the AIChE Annual Meeting held in Philadelphia, PA, on Nov. 10-17, 2008. The meeting was both historic and telling. Attended by more than 5,000 professionals and 1,600 undergraduate students, it was the largest meeting ever held by AIChE.

It demonstrated not only the vibrancy of the profession, but its diversity. This meeting was also a distinct reminder of how much the profession and AIChE have changed in the last 100 years.

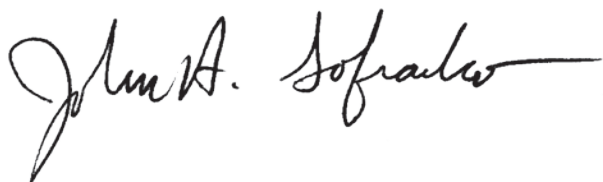
As reported in the 25<sup>th</sup> AIChE anniversary book, the original meetings of AIChE members were small and collegiate gatherings of the men of the profession. In 1908, only over a dozen universities offered degrees in chemical engineering. Most of the practicing chemical engineers were chemists and mechanical engineers who were blending together the knowledge and talent needed to innovate and manufacture in the field of chemistry. They were, by and large, men of stature in the field. To join AIChE in 1908 required an initiation fee of \$20 in the currency of the day and the advance payment of the annual dues of \$20. In today's currency, this would be a \$600 investment! The policies and activities of AIChE at that time were intentionally meant to develop an exclusive society.

The AIChE of today, however, is tremendously inclusive and diverse by design. As I walked through the halls of the Philadelphia meeting, and attended the numerous activities and sessions, I saw a world of chemical engineering, which is very different from that the founders would have seen 100 years ago. First of all, there were over 7,000 who participated in the meeting. The attendees came from over 170 academic institutions, 2,350 companies, and 50 countries. The participants were diverse in every aspect of race, gender and national origin. There were over 5,400 technical presentations and 750 sessions with many cutting edge topics, which would have been unheard of 100 years ago, let alone 25 years ago, such as nanoelectronic materials, biomedical composites, computational catalysis, and sustainability.

How did the profession of chemical engineering evolve to be such a vibrant and diverse profession in just 100 years? Many of the chapters in this centennial book address this question, while archiving the developments and activities of the Institute and the chemical engineering profession for the past 30 years.

I'd like to thank the authors who contributed their valuable time and insight to this book. I'd also like to thank Haeja Han and Steve Smith,

the co-editors of the book, for their tireless efforts in editing the chapters and working with the authors to document the history of the discipline and AIChE. They did a wonderful job of encapsulating the history of the profession and the Institute.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John A. Sofranko". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**John A. Sofranko**

AIChE Executive Director 2001- 2008

