



SVENSKA KEMISAMFUNDET

Sektionen för ytkemi och materialkemi

Report from meeting in Lotsstugan, Härnösand, 23-24th May 2023

Present: Joakim Stenhammar <joakim.stenhammar@fkem1.lu.se>; Edlund, Håkan <Hakan.Edlund@miun.se>; Karlson, L. (Leif) <leif.karlson@nouryon.com>; thomas.ederth@liu.se; Agneta Sjögren <Agneta.Sjogren@kemisamfundet.se>; Espinosa Marzal, Rosa Maria rosae@illinois.edu

Initial Program Outline

Tues pm

Arrival from 12.00, lunch 13.30

Short introduction of background and goals

Discussion on following topics:

Annual symposia

National Meetings

coffee

ACS perspective

Dinner

Wednesday

Breakfast

9.00

Outreach to other groups than academia

Which industry groups are "Our target"

coffee

Role of Board

Teaching initiatives

lunch

0. General

Mark opened the meeting and explained the main goals of the meeting. The retreat is an informal meeting of our Section Board to review our activities, discuss other possibilities and examine our role towards our members. The document can hopefully be used as a reference by future chairmen and boards.

As an active member of a related section at the ACS, and responsible for recruitment, Prof Espinosa Marzal was invited to provide an external perspective..

Examples of questions to address: What is the role of the section? Section roles vis a vis Samfundet roles. How to ensure revitalization? Should we continue with annual meetings? Should we expand our role and, if so, in what way?

Over recent years the section has run its own symposium on an annual basis, which we maintained even during the pandemic and have coined the term "Zoomposium". There have been various models for the meetings tried over the years with varied results. One day meetings are in general unsatisfactory because they do not provide adequate networking opportunities. Lunch to lunch meetings with two nights in between have been the most successful formula. A recent effort has been to combine meetings with other groups wherever possible, to avoid "utmötning". Examples of this are the fusion of the section meeting with the (then) Akzo Nobel Surface Chemistry meeting, and joint meetings together with Chalmers Materials for Tomorrow, and Malmö University's Biofilms

meeting. This has meant that the format has varied somewhat, but continuity has been maintained without overtaxing the community. It has also led to cross fertilization.

With the advent of the National meetings the nature of the symposia has evolved to reflect the different functions : The national meeting with a focus more on established scientists, and an out of phase meeting (or T-j-meeting) with a larger focus on less established scientists and PhD students.

1. National Meetings

By now 2 national meetings have been organized by SCS, in 2018 and 2022. The next national meeting is planned for June 2025 in Stockholm or Uppsala. Mark has expressed interest in organizing it in Stockholm. The Section has previously organized its symposium during the national meeting, Monday lunch – Wednesday lunch, including 3 keynote lectures. Last time, the section was involved in the “SIT sessions”, together with the inorganic and theoretical chemistry sections. *Should this be changed or kept?* The feeling was that it has been rewarding to provide joint sessions and should be preserved.

How should we help finding a “formula” for future SCS meetings?

Everyone agreed that the meeting has an important role in networking on a national level and should be kept as a biannual event to ensure continuity and predictability. This ensures that all PhD students will be able to attend at least one such meeting as an experienced We also held the view that there should be a “formula established” for the meetings to make it easier for local organisers to deliver, but also to assist the central organization to support and help drive the meeting. The view was expressed that the national meeting is probably the single most important activity of the Chemical Society.

If the meeting is to be held in the week prior to midsummer, then the feeling was that a Monday lunch-Wednesday lunch would be the most appropriate, given that many people travel for midsummer.

As part of the discussion about ACS, student participation etc in ensuing points, a concrete suggestion for complementary activities such as eg career development workshops, paper writing sessions and so on could be a useful addition and increase the attractiveness of membership. This could usefully be organized by the central organization.

2. Annual meeting

In 2023, the Annual meeting will be a joint meeting with Materials for Tomorrow at Chalmers. Everyone agreed that we should continue to organize the section meetings biannually (given that the national meetings are biannual). Discussions about how to adjust the format included to make it more adjusted to PhD students, either by welcoming more contributed talks and/or by merging it with a short research school in connection with the conference, taught by some of the invited speakers. *Should either of these ideas be pushed forward, and if so, how? What are good topics for short (2-3 days) PhD courses? How to secure financing for this?*

Possible examples are so called student conferences where all talks are given by students, typically with one or two keynote lectures. There are different formats available – where supervisors and other senior researchers attend to provide a rigorous audience, (and identify potential postdocs etc) or one where the students run the meetings themselves.

Rosa informed about the ((National Divisional Meeting of the ACS COLL)) Gordon Research conferences which have a GRS event are organized as student meetings, where the students both organize and participate. These also include activities such as career development workshops.

Possibly the most discussion time was spent on the issue of teaching associated with a student or meeting. See section below.

The current format of two nights lunch-lunch was firmly endorsed , with the caveat that if there is a course component it would need to be longer. In this case invited speakers could for example also lecture for eg 2-3 hours each on the course topic of interest.

The “Neutron week “ was used as an example which typically involves 2.5 days conference, and another 2.5 days spent on industry interaction, paperwriting, interview skills etc.

3. ACS-COLL

Rosa presented a summary of the activities in the ACS COLL section. COLL is one of the 32 ACS divisions, with about 1.950 members. The ACS hosts two national meetings per year including (a few) plenary talks, topical symposia, “soft skills” courses for students etc. The division issue a newsletter twice a year. Administer their own website. COLL also have a symposium independently of the national meetings which has a greater student focus and is thus cheaper.

One of the points of interest is how we can learn from ACS in terms of getting participation and traction in the scientific community.

It is considered to be good for the academic CV to be seen to be organizing symposia, and it is an honour to be asked to propose a topic. Clearly all the academic (and also much industry) community are engaged in the society by default, not just the few board members.

Universities compete to be the host for the divisional meetings! (cf Sweden!!!!)

There is a strong coupling between the ACS and academia – it is meritorious to be seen to be active and it reflects well on the university. The chemical society in Sweden clearly does not have this leverage. Should it? Could it?

The ACS match funds raised by the divisions! (not 1:1 but significant)

They also issue many awards: for example one for undergraduate masters student. Best Poster, best PhD presentation etc etc.

And provide career panel discussions and student symposia.

A lot of organization (eg newsletter, website) is done voluntarily by people aiming to get onto committees.

Their “reasons to join”

Networking

Leadership opportunities

Recruitment

Community

Prestige

Visibility (awards etc)

COLL also support other symposia, organized by members of COLL, within or outside the US, with up to 3000 USD. *We should investigate this as a funding option for our symposia and/or courses!*

Presentation material of the ACS/COLL is appended at the end of the document.

4. Teaching

It was discussed whether organising PhD courses should be part of the section's core activities, or even appropriate to address shortcomings in academia. The benefit is to Swedish academic community as a whole.....

The Physical Chemistry section has organised a course on molecular spectroscopy on 3 occasions, with generally positive results. There was a general interest in organising PhD courses on topics that are not represented at all universities, either more general/theoretical (e.g. intermolecular interactions, soft matter physics) or experimental/methodological. An additional point of doing this is the networking between students from different universities.

It is not without challenges.

How should we identify suitable topics for PhD schools?

How do we secure funding? There are significant costs for travel, accommodation etc. we would need to have a longterm financing from eg Carl Trygges – not feasible to apply on a yearly basis
Should it be done together with other consortia/organisations (e.g. SwedNESS, Nordforsk)?

This was not resolved and it was agreed that board members would discuss locally and report back at next board meeting in terms of subject, ability and willingness to contribute.

5. Industry interaction

It was discussed how to maintain/increase our contacts with industry since our activities are primarily academic. There are different possible formats for this, such as work fairs ("arbetsmarknadsdagar"), outreach talks from alumni, increasing possibilities for company presentations at our symposia etc. Several options and companies were discussed, and it was agreed that we should start by discussing the issue with our current industrial contacts. *Leif will discuss the question at Nouryon, and Thomas will contact the Östergötland Innovative Materials Arena to initiate a discussion.*

The following companies were identified. Northvolt, Nouryon, Astra Zeneca, Novozymes, Färing, Akzo Nobel, Nordsjöfärg, Oatly, Tetrapak, Camurus, Cytiva, Billerud, Permascand as initial examples, in addition to branch organisations such as Väst Svenska kemi och materialcluster (?) Medicon Village, Innovative Materials Arena

6. Teachers

Activities aimed towards school teachers were briefly discussed. *It was agreed that such activities are however better suited for the central SCS level than for the sections. Bezelius days.* It was observed that teachers had very limited opportunities to participate in meetings, and also that their courses are more general than a single field of chemistry.