

Book Review

Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry on CD-ROM. Edited by A. R. Katritzky, C. W. Rees. Pergamon, 1997; \$795. ISBN 0-08-042982-3.

This set of 2 CDs comprises the entire contents of *Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry*. This 8-volume reference work was originally published in 1984, and provided excellent overall coverage of all aspects of heterocyclic chemistry. Since *Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry* has already proved itself to be an invaluable reference work, this review is restricted to comments about the CD-ROM medium itself rather than the content. It is assumed that the reader is familiar with the layout and organisation of the original work.

The electronic version, which will run on either PCs or Macs, consists of scanned page images combined with various search facilities. With the exception of the very smallest print, the page images are clear and sharp, but a magnifying glass facility allows one to zoom in on any part of a page. Browsing through the work is straightforward and particular pages can be bookmarked. The search facilities are easy to use: one can readily locate different sections and sub-sections, and can search for keywords. Unfortunately it is not possible to search for logical combinations of key words, e.g. "pyridine" AND "bromination". However, searching for bromination, and then looking at the hits in the listed chapter that clearly is con-

cerned with pyridines quickly leads to the relevant page. The references of interest are immediately accessible from the screen or from the references link printing facility. One can also search for authors, although no structure searches are possible. It is a pity that the publishers did not take the opportunity to add some extra search functionality to the CD-version over and above the hard copy index. Presumably the cost was prohibitive.

In order to test the CD under a variety of conditions, I used it on 4 different machines, 2 PCs and 2 Macs. On both a Mac Performa 6300 and on a Pentium (running at 180 MHz), both searching and browsing through text were frustratingly slow. Even scrolling down a page seemed to take ages. On a newer Performa (running at 200 MHz) with an 8 x speed CD-drive, things were better, but it was only on a new Pentium 2 (running at 233 MHz) with a 24 x speed CD-drive, that the standard operations became sufficiently fast to stop me wanting to reach for the hard copy on the shelves behind me.

Even though *Comprehensive Heterocyclic Chemistry II* is now published, it is good to have the original work available again, particularly if you do not have access to the hard copy. However, you appear to need a fast machine to run it effectively!

C. J. Moody, University of Exeter

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