

**Name Reactions and Reagents in Organic Synthesis, 2nd Edition;** by B. P. Mundy, M. G. Eller, and F. G. Favaloro Jr.; Wiley & Sons: New York, 2005, hardcover, 882 pp, £ 48.95, US\$ 89.95, ISBN 0-471-22854-0

Naming reactions after their discoverers has a long tradition. This tradition is more prevalent in organic chemistry than in any other branch of chemistry. By this tradition, the chemical world not only honours those who have made a substantial contribution to the trade's tool kit, but it also aids in remembering the wealth of information that each chemist's brain harbours. The human brain seems wired to be particularly good at storing and retrieving information that is tied to something 'human' (even if it is just a name) rather than strings of abstract formulae.

The number of named reactions known to organic chemistry is in the upper-three-digit realm. As very many of these reactions are in wide-spread use, a systematic treatment of them seems to be a good idea. *Name Reactions and Reagents in Organic Synthesis* meets the demand for such a dictionary. And a dictionary it is, indeed. The authors dive into their subject without much ado: after a brief preface and eight pages of terms and acronyms, the reader has to manage just one page of introduction to the 'common denominator' – the organizing principles of all the entries that are to follow. The rest of the book is devoted to what its title suggests: named reactions and named reagents. The authors stick firmly to their building principle: a double-page for each reaction and a single page for

each reagent. The principle applies whether a 'household' name is being discussed or something rather arcane that will be of interest only to a handful of specialists. 'Reaction, mechanism, notes, and examples' are the building blocks of every entry. By reiterating this principle throughout the volume, the authors have created a reference manual that is extremely easy both to understand and to use. The provided information is limited to chemical formulae and literature references. No explanatory notes as to the usefulness or the limitations of the reactions and reagents are given. So the book clearly aims at an experienced readership of postgraduates and professionals who seek quick reliable basic information that can be built upon. In this respect, the volume fully succeeds. While the alphabetical listing almost renders it obsolete, an index as an alternative searching mode has been included. I found the volume extremely useful and recommend it without reservation to all organic chemists, particularly those whose work includes synthesis design. Due to the fact that relevant information can be extracted from this reference work much more rapidly than from textbooks or from protocol and methods books, it seems a safe bet to predict that it will not enjoy a reclusive life on the shelf but rather indulge a busy life as a sought-after consultant. In terms of want, there is nothing missing – nothing that would readily come to a reviewer's mind, anyway.

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