



# Liquid Chromatography

Fundamentals and Instrumentation

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# LIQUID CHROMATOGRAPHY: FUNDAMENTALS AND INSTRUMENTATION

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# Contents

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## Contributors xi

### 1. Milestones in the Development of Liquid Chromatography 1

L.R. SNYDER AND J.W. DOLAN

- 1.1. Introduction 2
- 1.2. HPLC Theory and Practice 4
- 1.3. Columns 6
- 1.4. Equipment 9
- 1.5. Detectors 12
- Apologies and Acknowledgements 13
- References 14

### 2. Kinetic Theories of Liquid Chromatography 19

A. FELINGER AND A. CAVAZZINI

- 2.1. Introduction 20
- 2.2. Macroscopic Kinetic Theories 20
- 2.3. Microscopic Kinetic Theories 30
- 2.4. Comparison of the Microscopic and Macroscopic Models 38
- References 39

### 3. Column Technology in Liquid Chromatography 41

K.K. UNGER, S. LAMOTTE AND E. MACHTEJEVAS

- 3.1. Introduction 42
- 3.2. Column Design and Hardware 44
- 3.3. Column Packing Materials and Stationary Phases 49
- 3.4. Column Systems and Operations 63
- 3.5. Chromatographic Column Testing and Evaluation 67
- 3.6. Column Maintenance and Troubleshooting 70
- 3.7. Today's Column Market—an Evaluation, Comparison, and Critical Appraisal 74
- References 83



#### 4. Secondary Chemical Equilibria in Reversed-Phase Liquid Chromatography 87

M.C. GARCÍA-ÁLVAREZ-COQUE AND J.R. TORRES-LAPASÍO

- 4.1. Introduction 88
- 4.2. Acid–Base Equilibria 89
- 4.3. Ion-Interaction Chromatography 90
- 4.4. Micellar Liquid Chromatography 97
- 4.5. Metal Complexation 100
- Further Reading 103

#### 5. Hydrophilic Interaction Liquid Chromatography 105

A. CAVAZZINI AND A. FELINGER

- 5.1. Introduction 105
- 5.2. Principles of HILIC 107
- 5.3. Mobile and Stationary Phases Commonly Employed in HILIC 110
- 5.4. Application Examples 114
- References 116

#### 6. Hydrophobic Interaction Chromatography 121

C.T. TOMAZ AND J.A. QUEIROZ

- 6.1. Introduction 122
- 6.2. Principles of Hydrophobic Interaction Chromatography 122
- 6.3. Main Factors that Affect Hydrophobic Interaction Chromatography 125
- 6.4. Purification Strategies 130
- 6.5. Practical Aspects of Hydrophobic Interaction Chromatography Purification 131
- 6.6. Selected Applications 132
- 6.7. Future Trends 135
- References 136

#### 7. Liquid–Solid Chromatography 143

L.R. SNYDER AND J.W. DOLAN

- 7.1. Introduction 143
- 7.2. Retention and Separation 144
- 7.3. Method Development 149
- 7.4. Problems in the Use of Normal-Phase Chromatography 154
- References 155

#### 8. Ion Chromatography 157

B. PAULL AND P.N. NESTERENKO

- 8.1. Introduction 157
- 8.2. Basic Principles and Separation Modes 158

8.3. Instrumentation	165
8.4. Applications	185
References	188

## 9. Size-Exclusion Chromatography 193

A.M. STRIEGEL

9.1. Introduction	194
9.2. Historical Background	194
9.3. Retention In Size-Exclusion Chromatography	197
9.4. Band Broadening in Size-Exclusion Chromatography	202
9.5. Resolution in Size-Exclusion Chromatography	205
9.6. Size-Exclusion Chromatography Enters the Modern Era: The Determination of Absolute Molar Mass	207
9.7. Size-Exclusion Chromatography Today: Multidetector Measurements, Physicochemical Characterization, Two-Dimensional Techniques	217
9.8. Conclusions	219
Acknowledgement and Disclaimer	220
References	220

## 10. Solvent Selection in Liquid Chromatography 225

G. RAMIS-RAMOS AND M.C. GARCÍA-ÁLVAREZ-COQUE

10.1. Elution Strength	226
10.2. Columns and Solvents in RPLC, NPLC, and HILIC	228
10.3. Assessment of the Elution Strength	229
10.4. Schoenmakers's Rule	231
10.5. Isoelutotropic Mixtures	233
10.6. Solvent-Selectivity Triangles	234
10.7. Practical Guidelines for Optimization of Mobile Phase Composition	241
10.8. Additional Considerations for Solvent Selection	246
References	248

## 11. Method Development in Liquid Chromatography 251

J.W. DOLAN AND L.R. SNYDER

11.1. Introduction	252
11.2. Goals	253
11.3. A Structured Approach to Method Development	253
11.4. Method Development in Practice	258
11.5. Prevalidation	263
11.6. Validation	264
11.7. Documentation	265
11.8. Summary	266
References	267

12. Theory and Practice of Gradient Elution Liquid Chromatography	269
J.W. DOLAN AND L.R. SNYDER	
12.1. Introduction	269
12.2. The Effects of Experimental Conditions on Separation	272
12.3. Method Development	278
12.4. Problems Associated with Gradient Elution	281
References	282
13. General Instrumentation	283
J.G. SHACKMAN	
13.1. Introduction	284
13.2. Solvent Source	286
13.3. Pumping Systems	286
13.4. Gradient-Elution Mixing Systems	289
13.5. Sample Injection	291
13.6. Column Compartment	293
13.7. Tubings and Fittings	294
13.8. Detector Overview	296
13.9. Ultraviolet-Visible Absorbance Detectors	298
13.10. Refractive Index Detectors	300
13.11. Evaporative Light-Scattering Detectors	301
13.12. Charged Aerosol Detectors	301
13.13. Conductivity Detectors	302
13.14. Fluorescence Detectors	302
13.15. Electrochemical Detectors	303
13.16. Other Detection Methods	303
References	304
14. Advanced Spectroscopic Detectors for Identification and Quantification: Mass Spectrometry	307
S. CROTTI, I. ISAK AND P. TRALDI	
14.1. Introduction	308
14.2. Ionization Methods Suitable for LC Coupling	309
14.3. How to Increase Specificity of MS Data	317
14.4. Micro- and Nano-LC-MS	321
14.5. Capillary Electrochromatography	325
References	327
15. Advanced Spectroscopic Detectors for Identification and Quantification: FTIR and Raman	333
J. KULIGOWSKI, B. LENDL, AND G. QUINTÁS	
15.1. Introduction	333
15.2. Off-Line Hyphenation	337

15.3. On-Line Hyphenation	339
15.4. Conclusions	345
References	346
 16. Advanced Spectroscopic Detectors for Identification and Quantification: Nuclear Magnetic Resonance	349
J.-L. WOLFENDER, N. BOHNI, K. NDJOKO-IOSET AND A.S. EDISON	
16.1. Introduction	350
16.2. Hyphenation of NMR with HPLC	351
16.3. Advances in NMR Sensitivity	353
16.4. Strategies for Obtaining NMR Information from a Given LC Peak	359
16.5. Integration with a Multiple Detection System (LC–NMR–MS)	368
16.6. Quantification Capabilities	368
16.7. Fields of Application	370
16.8. Conclusions	379
Acknowledgments	380
References	380
 17. Quantitative Structure Property (Retention) Relationships in Liquid Chromatography	385
R. KALISZAN	
17.1. Introduction	386
17.2. Methodology and Goals of QSRR Studies	386
17.3. Applications of QSRR in Proteomics	392
17.4. Characterization of Stationary Phases	393
17.5. QSRR and Assessment of Lipophilicity of Xenobiotics	395
17.6. QSRR Analysis of Retention Data Determined on Immobilized-Biomacromolecule Stationary Phases	399
17.7. Quantitative Retention–(Biological) Activity Relationships	400
17.8. Chemometrically Processed Multivariate Chromatographic Data in Relation to Pharmacological Properties of Drugs and “Drug Candidates”	400
17.9. Concluding Remarks	401
Acknowledgment	402
References	402
 18. Modeling of Preparative Liquid Chromatography	407
T. FORNSTEDT, P. FORSSÉN AND J. SAMUELSSON	
18.1. Introduction	408
18.2. Column Model	409
18.3. Adsorption Model	410
18.4. Process Optimization of Preparative Chromatography	415
18.5. Case Example	422
References	422

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19. Process Concepts in Preparative Chromatography 427

M. KASPEREIT AND A. SEIDEL-MORGENSTERN

- 19.1. Introduction 428
- 19.2. Classical Isocratic Discontinuous Elution Chromatography 429
- 19.3. Other Discontinuous Operating Concepts 432
- 19.4. Continuous Concepts of Preparative Chromatography 437
- 19.5. Optimization and Concept Comparison 446
- 19.6. Conclusions 448
- Acknowledgments 448
- References 449

20. Miniaturization and Microfluidics 453

F. FORET, P. SMEJKAL AND M. MACKA

- 20.1. Introduction, Definitions, and Scope 453
- 20.2. Microfluidic Systems for Separations 455
- 20.3. Commercial Instrumentation 459
- 20.4. Conclusion 465
- Acknowledgment 465
- References 465

21. Capillary Electrochromatography 469

A. ROCCO, G. D'ORAZIO, Z. ATURKI AND S. FANALI

- 21.1. Introduction 469
- 21.2. Principles of Capillary Electrochromatography 470
- 21.3. Instrumentation 471
- 21.4. Method Optimization in CEC 478
- 21.5. Examples of Some Recent Applications 479
- 21.6. Conclusions and Future Trends 486
- References 487

Index 493

# Milestones in the Development of Liquid Chromatography

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## OUTLINE

<b>1.1. Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1.1. <i>Developments before 1960</i>	2
1.1.2. <i>HPLC at the Beginning</i>	3
<b>1.2. HPLC Theory and Practice</b>	<b>4</b>
1.2.1. <i>New HPLC Modes and Techniques</i>	5
1.2.2. <i>Selection of Conditions for the Control of Selectivity</i>	5
<b>1.3. Columns</b>	<b>6</b>
1.3.1. <i>Particles and Column Packing</i>	6
1.3.2. <i>Stationary Phases and Selectivity</i>	9
<b>1.4. Equipment</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.5. Detectors</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Apologies and Acknowledgements</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>14</b>

The importance of liquid chromatography (LC), and especially high-performance LC (HPLC), in today's world hardly needs stating. It is the most widely used technique for the analysis of chemical mixtures and has contributed in a major way to science (especially the biological sciences) and everyday laboratory practice. Liquid chromatography is primarily a practical technique, so our story is limited to those innovations that

contributed significantly to its present use in “working” laboratories. In reflecting on the history of LC, it appears to us that only a few “essential” actors are in this drama: single individuals whose absence might have delayed the technique by more than a year or two. Thus, the development of present-day LC has largely been an evolutionary, rather than a revolutionary, process. Furthermore, many important innovations within the past 50 years have occurred within industrial research and development (R&D) groups, where it is often not possible to assign credit for a final product to a single person. Finally, every attempt at history suffers from incomplete and conflicting accounts of who did what—and when. In the present “history,” we try to emphasize “what” and “when” rather than “who.”

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

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Several important innovations in the history of liquid chromatography are reviewed by Ettre [1]:

- Invention of chromatography in the early 1900s [2].
- Invention of partition and paper chromatography in the early 1940s [3].
- Development of ion-exchange chromatography [4] and the amino-acid analyzer during the 1950s [5].
- Invention of gel-filtration chromatography in the late 1950s [6,7].
- Development of the gel-permeation chromatograph in the early 1960s [8,9].
- Development of high-performance LC in the mid-1960s [8,10–17].

The present chapter emphasizes work on HPLC, while noting major, prior contributions that made this technique possible. Most advances in HPLC can be organized as follows:

- Development or application of basic theory, combined with empirical observations of the separation process.
- Invention of new chromatographic modes (e.g., ion-pair chromatography, hydrophilic-interaction chromatography) and the development of HPLC columns for new applications (chiral separation, large biomolecules).
- Development and improvement of equipment and columns.

### 1.1.1. Developments before 1960

A good account of the discovery of chromatography by Tswett is given in [2] and [14, pp. 4–6]. Despite a few subsequent applications of chromatography in other laboratories [14, pp. 7–9], this technique became generally accepted only after its reintroduction in 1931 by Kuhn,

Winterstein, and Lederer [18]. The invention of *liquid-partition* chromatography was reported by Martin and Synge in 1941, followed soon after by its extension to *paper* chromatography in 1944 and the first application of *two-dimensional* chromatography [3].

Significant work on ion-exchange separation began in the 1930s, with the subsequent development and application of ion-exchange chromatography (IEC) for separation of the rare earths and transuranium elements [4]. The extension of IEC to organic compounds was next, implemented by Cohn and Samuelson [14, pp. 17–21]. By 1958, Moore, Stein, and Spackman reported the automatic analysis of amino acid samples by means of IEC [5]. Their system was a precursor of HPLC that incorporated automatic pumping, efficient IEC columns, and continuous colorimetric detection. This system was later improved and commercialized as the Beckman-Spinco model 120B amino acid analyzer.

Still another major development, in the later 1950s, was the invention of gel filtration [6,7] for the separation of large biomolecules by molecular size; this was followed a few years later by the development of gel-permeation chromatography (GPC) for the similar separation of synthetic polymers [9]. The latter then led to the development of a commercial GPC system by Waters Associates (the GPC-100 [8]), which would morph into an early commercial HPLC system (the ALC-100).

### 1.1.2. HPLC at the Beginning

Prior to the development of the first HPLC systems, gas chromatography (GC) provided an example of what HPLC might be capable of: automation, speed, and detection sensitivity, as well as the separation of higher-boiling and thermally unstable compounds. By the early 1960s, the automation of LC had been demonstrated for amino-acid analysis and gel-permeation chromatography (Section 1.1.2). By then, it was appreciated that smaller particles in well-packed beds could increase both separation speed and efficiency. Fast separations with small-particle columns also require higher pressures to pump the mobile phase through the column. Detectors that could be used with LC for most samples presented a major challenge at this time—and for several years thereafter (Section 1.5).

Before 1965, the possibility of using HPLC for separating samples other than amino acids or polymers had undoubtedly occurred to many people. However, the exploitation of this idea required its reduction to practice, followed by the production of commercially available equipment, as in the case of the amino-acid analyzer and the gel-permeation chromatograph (Section 1.1.2). Viewed in these terms, *high-performance* LC was first reduced to practice in ~1964, in the United States under the direction of Csaba Horváth [16] and in Holland by Josef Huber (see [10, pp. 159–166



and 209–217]). The system developed by Horváth was subsequently the basis for the LCS 1000 Nucleic Acid Analyzer sold by Picker Nuclear (later acquired by Varian) and contributed to the first general-purpose HPLC (Waters ALC-100) [8]. Jack Kirkland had visited Huber's lab in 1964 and subsequently began an HPLC program at DuPont [19–22], which culminated in the Model 820 at about the same time as the ALC-100. By 1970, sales of HPLC systems were dominated by Waters Associates and Du Pont. Superficially porous Zipax [22] was initially the most popular column packing. In our opinion, Horváth, Huber, and Kirkland can be considered the “fathers” of HPLC. Some closely related work at this time by others [23–29] is also relevant to the origin of HPLC. For a description of the columns, equipment, and practice at that time, see [30].

## 1.2. HPLC THEORY AND PRACTICE

Separation as a function of experimental conditions was understood in general terms for GC, and similar principles were expected to apply to HPLC. Resolution,  $R_s$ , can be described by the Purnell equation [31] in terms of the plate number,  $N$ , separation factor,  $\alpha$ , and retention factor,  $k$ :

$$R_s = 0.25(N^{0.5})(\alpha - 1) [k/(k + 1)] \quad (1.1)$$

A semi-quantitative understanding of column efficiency (*plate number*,  $N$ ) existed prior to 1965, based on the further development of the van Deemter equation for GC [32] and its extension to LC by Giddings [23]. Later work resulted in the highly useful and widely applied Knox equation [33]:

$$h = Av^{0.33} + B/v + Cv \quad (1.2)$$

where the reduced plate height,  $h$ , is related to the reduced velocity,  $v$ , of the mobile phase. The later development of “*Poppe*” (or “kinetic”) plots further advanced our understanding and use of column efficiency [34]. For further details on Eq. (1.2) and values of  $N$ , see Chapter 2 and [35]. When developing an HPLC procedure, the main challenge has been the selection of separation conditions for the control of peak spacing, that is, “optimum” values of  $\alpha$  (Section 1.2.2).

Basic theory played an important role in the development of HPLC, but its implementation was primarily the result of (a) the introduction of new separation modes or techniques (Section 1.2.1), (b) a better understanding of how best to vary conditions for a satisfactory separation (Section 1.2.2), and (c) improved columns (Section 1.3) and hardware (Sections 1.4 and 1.5).