EDITOR'S PAGE

Estonian well-known oil-shale scientists K. Urov and A. Sumberg compiled in 1992 a valuable monograph "Characteristics of Oil Shales and Shale-like Rocks of Known Deposits and Outcrops". The original Russian version was translated into English and published in 1999 as an issue of our journal OIL SHALE (Vol. 16, No. 3). This monograph comprises data about composition and other characteristics of oil shales and shale-like rocks as well as of their decomposition products. The authors had great difficulties in generalizing the data published in different editions. For instance, it was next to impossible to compare organic matter content determined and expressed on a different basis.

The authors have proposed the term 'content of so-called conditional organic mass $[100 - A^d - (CO_2)^d_M]$' since the determination of the actual organic matter content of shales is difficult, especially because of the necessity of considering the water in crystal hydrates.

Hence, we must ask whether it is possible to interpret oil shale research data unambiguously. Oil shale analysis begins with taking an average sample and ends with statistic data-processing. We, the editors of this journal, have in many cases accepted the test data as presented by the author(s) as the papers have been thoroughly studied by reviewers, as a rule. However, we have decided to pay more attention on this aspect in the future to enable unambiguous understanding and interpreting of the experimental results.

Lately I browsed some books published more than half a century ago. The work by J. Hüsse (Tartu University, Estonia, 1930) "Zusammensetzung und Eigenschaften der höheren Fraktionen des Estländischen Brennschiefer-Rohröls und seine Ausnutzungsmöglichkeiten als Schmieröl" deals with the results obtained in the Oil Shale Research Laboratory founded at Tartu University in 1925. Exact description of the experiment protocol and the presentation of the data enable to use these results successfully even this day.

Or another example. In 1947, the publishing house "Scientific Literature" in Tartu issued a four-volume monograph "Oil Shale" by A. Kozhevnikov (in Russian). This work demonstrates that generalization of test results to

work out experimentally well-grounded regularities must base on much brainwork.

What have we to propose to our younger generation who has decided to enrich our knowledge on oil shale by research on oil shale geology, geochemistry, chemical composition, processing technology, up to utilization of different products obtained. Our recommendation sounds: carry out the experiments in such a way that the results were reproducible tomorrow, the day after tomorrow and after centuries, of course if the object under study is the same.

As a young chemist in 1972, I was happy to get the outstanding work by Arnold J. Gordon and Richard A. Ford "The Chemist's Companion. A Handbook of Practical Data, Techniques and References" (A. Wiley-Interscience Publication, 1972). The 8th chapter of this book dealing with statistical data-processing has been an excellent aid in generalizing our results.

These thoughts are no nostalgic retrospection. We should strive for mastering a numerical language unambiguously understandable by all researchers in a common field of science.

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