Preface to the Second English Edition

It has been almost seven years since the publication of the first English Edition of my book on TLC. The following improvements in technology over the years have made it necessary for me to update the first edition: new precoated layers for both existing and new fields of applications, a new generation of equipment for safe operations and reproducible results, new devices such as the Diode Array Detector and Bioluminescence Analyzer, new methods of interface between TLC and analysis methods, especially the use of digital cameras for the documentation of thin layer chromatograms. For the reader’s benefit, I have updated my description of available products on the market.

I had a wealth of assistance and support, including many telephone exchanges within Germany to Hamburg, Berlin, Stuttgart, Darmstadt and Offenburg as well as the exchanging of many files via e-mail to and from Muttenz (Switzerland) and Houston (Texas, USA).

During the last few years I held a series of lectures on chromatography and partook in TLC workshops at high schools and universities within Germany. In attending those events, it was reinforced to me how important sound and comprehensive knowledge of TLC is, in particular for recognizing and avoiding errors.

If this book can contribute to confer my 40 years long enthusiasm for thin layer chromatography to the reader, then the energy expended was worthwhile and I take leave in my retirement.

Eckental, September 2006

Elke Hahn-Deinstrop
Preface to the First English Edition

Shortly after the announcements in the scientific press in early 1998 of the publication of the German edition of my book on TLC, I received many enquiries from outside Germany asking when the English version would be available.

The decision by Wiley-VCH to publish an English edition in 1999 was the start of many hectic months for me. To produce the present book, not only had the text, references and market overview to be updated, but also two more Sections describing new equipment had to be included. Documents 4–13 were revised and Tables 21a and 26 were added. The Sections on video documentation were also extensively revised to take account of technical advances in this area.

Numerous discussions by telephone and fax have helped the translator, Mr. R. G. Leach, to import a flavor of my personal writing style into the English edition. The main aim is to prevent fatigue and to inspire the reader to read on. Also, as a small “extra”, my ideas for two new cartoons have been excellently translated into actual drawings by Norbert Barth.

I dedicate the second of these new cartoons to Dr. Angelika Koch, with whom I published several papers last year on the subject of the ancient remedy frankincense (olibanum), and who, in the course of many conversations, gave me the strength to complete all the work for this book.

I hope that all my friends and colleagues, in nearby Europe and also in distant Japan, China, India and Australia, and all other TLC users worldwide will derive pleasure from reading my book and will have great success in their work with TLC!

Eckental, September 1999

Elke Hahn-Deinstrop
During twenty-five years of practical experience with thin-layer chromatography (TLC), I have learned to appreciate the advantages of this method of analysis, especially its power, flexibility and cost-effectiveness. The aim of this book is to pass on to a new generation of analysts any useful knowledge and practical tips that I have accumulated during this time. It includes some descriptions, illustrated by cartoons, of amusing incidents in the everyday laboratory life of a second-year apprentice and a trainee pharmacist. I have already found these anecdotes to be useful teaching aids. If the cartoons seem to suggest that a new university graduate is likely to be less knowledgeable about TLC than a young girl trained in an industrial laboratory, this is quite deliberate. However, I hope that established practitioners will also be able to pick up some tips that may be useful in their everyday work.

Formalism is nowadays unavoidable even in the field of TLC, and this book consequently contains a great many descriptions of practical procedures. The author has nevertheless taken great care to describe these accurately and reliably and also to give copious hints on how to avoid mistakes.

The theme of TLC as an art form is also discussed in a short section in the Appendix.

A writer starts the day with a blank sheet of paper and is happy with any prose or poetry successfully written on it. In TLC we start with a white plate. If the chromatograms we eventually obtain fulfill their intended purpose, we have had a successful day.

Eckental, October 1997

Elke Hahn-Deinstrop