

Updates for the Chemistry Self-Help Web Site

Roughly seventy years ago, in the 1930's, the world was introduced to a brand new, exciting form of entertainment: the "Talkies!"

Yep, that was the decade that movies evolved from the silent movies, to movies that actually included sound. Can you imagine the excitement, the fun, the pure thrill of actually hearing the movie and dialogue as it occurred, rather than reading enough snippets of the dialogue that you can fill in the parts that the editors didn't feel like typing?!?

I am pleased to announce that the chemistry web site has evolved, finally, to the '30's. Perhaps a bit of history is in order here; a few years ago, I was the recipient of an internal DSU development grant to put the self-help site together, including clips primarily from our chemistry shows. Unfortunately, the video capture device they gave me was not sophisticated enough to capture sound with the video. Since then, we've had a lot of really cool video clips sans sound.

This summer has been tough; I lost a girlfriend, I was stood up on a date, I lost a high school friend to a brain aneurysm, a good friend was knocked out of commission with a massive stroke, the father of a friend died of a heart attack, and my mother came to visit. Yep, a tough summer all the way around. Now, you might wonder what I do when I have a difficult summer. The answer is easy; I spend money.

One of the ways I spent money was on a new video capture device that actually INCLUDED sound. This summer, I've spent time going through old chemistry show videos and re-recording demonstrations. Now, it is your turn; you have to check out how cool the sodium explosion demonstration is



(<http://courses.dsu.edu/intchem/help/rxns/naexpl.avi>), or the thermite reaction (<http://courses.dsu.edu/intchem/help/rxns/thermite.avi>), or even the clip of me from (ulp) 1996 (<http://courses.dsu.edu/intchem/help/rxns/picric.avi>). There are lots of other talkies clips at the web site as well (<http://courses.dsu.edu/intchem/help.htm> and follow the links) that are distinguishable by the fact that all the newest (talkie) clips include a file size statement.

Now, those of us old enough to actually remember the '30's will tell you that the talkies did indeed have their casualties. As it turns out, many of the silent movie actors had terrible voices, such as Rudolph Valentino, and were forced to retire as talkies rapidly increased in popularity. In our case, the victim is indeed rapid download times. Without sound, the clips could be much smaller. Don't be surprised, though, if the clips you get are mono; since the camcorder we used was not stereo, many of these clips are not in stereo either.