

**Bond G C. *Catalysis by metals*. London: Academic Press, 1962. 519 p.**  
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The purpose of this book was to review what was known about the chemisorptive and catalytic properties of metals in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It took a chemical viewpoint, placing emphasis on the regular variation of catalytic activity across the periodic table. [The *SCI*® indicates that this book has been cited in more than 1,495 publications.]

## An Overview of Catalysis by Metals

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I started writing this book in 1959, at the age of 32. I had never written a book before and didn't know how to start; in fact, I spent six months trying to find out. This was followed by two years of hard slog. I often wished I had never begun it; but with a few chapters behind me, and with so much effort already invested, it seemed pointless to stop. I therefore persevered to the end, aided by an innate and irrational stubbornness. If an author were able to foresee the effort involved in bringing a work to fruition, there would be fewer books in our libraries. In trying to recall my life 30 years ago, I cannot imagine how I did what I did. I had a heavy teaching load at the University of Hull: one term, I had 18 contact hours per week. Our third son was born in 1959 and our daughter in 1961. The answer—I was young and full of energy.

It frankly surprises me that the book is still cited; it has been out of print for

some 20 years. I think its success owes something to good timing and not having any competitor. It came out at the beginning of a period of unrestrained growth in the subject: techniques such as selective chemisorption and electron microscopy were just becoming available. However, there had been sufficient advances for the main shape of the subject to be discerned. If I had tried five years earlier, there would not have been enough to say: five years later, there would have been too much. This, though, has not stopped others who have written of the progress in the field.<sup>1,2</sup>

If there is another reason for its success—and if I may be forgiven for immodesty—I took pains to write in plain but interesting English. I sketched out whole paragraphs and composed each sentence in my head before I wrote it. While I do not claim to have emulated Shakespeare—he never erased a word—we did both go to the same school, and I tried to acquire his great gift. I recently looked again at my manuscript of chapter 2: there weren't all that many changes. Also, of course, life is too short not to make a stab at getting it right the first time. I remain unconvinced that word processors enable us to write better books; first thoughts are often the best. As final tips to aid clarity, set and punctuate equations and formulae so that they can be read as part of the text, and minimize the number of symbols in the text.

If you haven't already written a book, why don't you think about it? As I said in my preface, everybody should try it—once!

1. Satterfield C N. *Heterogeneous catalysis in practice*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1980. 416 p. (Cited 240 times.)  
2. Campbell I M. *Catalysis at surfaces*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1988. 250 p.