To the Editor

An article by Luffer and Schram [1] published in 1990 on the electron–ionization mass spectrometry of fullerenes reported that doubly and triply charged C_{60} and C_{70} ions break down by loss of neutral C_2 particles to yield doubly and triply charged product ions. It went on to say, "The fragmentation behavior of the doubly charged C_{60} molecule is, thus, much different than polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in that the latter fragment by loss of singly charged ions as a major process, a route not observed in either the C_{60} or C_{70} doubly charged species." The implication, of course, is that PAHs do not exhibit the behavior described for fullerenes. It then proceeded to offer a rationale for the alleged difference in behavior.

One of the observations emphasized in a 1962 report from my laboratory [2], which the authors had cited, is that the breakdown of many doubly and triply charged aromatic molecules is to a similarly charged fragment and a small neutral molecule—the same behavior that they found so striking in the fullerenes. Thus, there was nothing here that needed rationalizing.

More recently, McElvany and Ross [3] published in this journal an "Account and Perspective" entitled "Mass Spectrometry and Fullerenes" in which they repeat the above misleading statement by Luffer and Schram.

Although the authors of both papers acknowledge the error, they are unwilling to publish corrections. Thus, I am writing to you to correct the error made in both articles.

I would think that most authors, once they become aware of an error in their published work, would prefer to correct it themselves rather than leave it to someone else to do it for them. At the same time, when I have reviewed the literature in some area and discovered erroneous or misleading statements in that literature, I have felt that I had a responsibility to call attention to them. Hence, my question now is, Whose responsibility is it to correct such misstatements? Or, at least, to avoid perpetuating them?

SEYMOUR MEYERSON
650 N. Tippecanoe Street
Gary, Indiana

References

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