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[Home](#) » [Spring 2009](#) » [Around the Columns](#) » A superman of chemistry

## Around the Columns

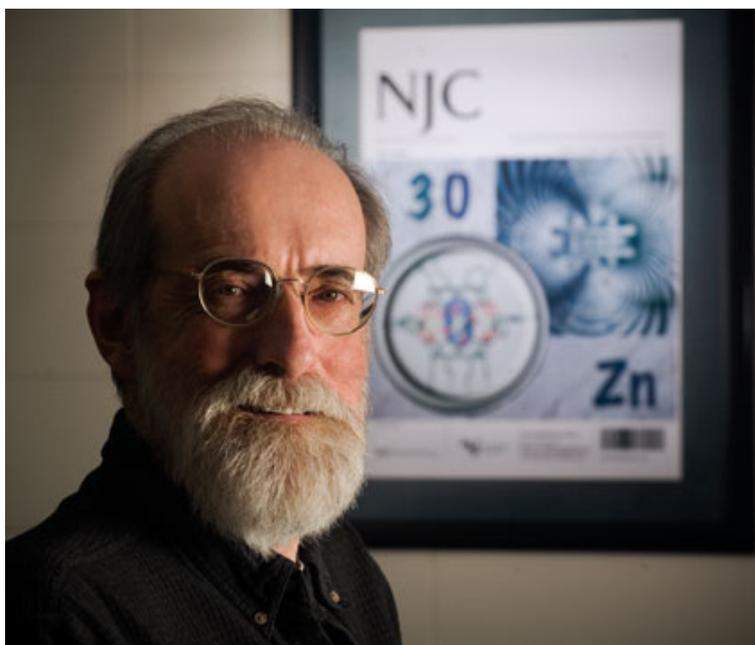
### A superman of chemistry

University of Missouri Curators Professor of Chemistry Jerry Atwood casts a large shadow in the international world of science, but it is perhaps his youngest son's perspective that best illustrates the renowned chemist's stature.

“When he was about 4 years old, somebody asked, ‘What are you going to be when you grow up?’” Atwood says of his son, Stuart, now a sophomore at Rock Bridge High School in Columbia. “He said, ‘A policeman, Superman or a chemist.’”

As chair of the Department of Chemistry and a 15-year MU veteran, Atwood may not have superhuman strength, but he does have microscopic vision. Atwood leads a research team in the field of supramolecular chemistry, or what he describes as “chemistry beyond the molecule.”

“It refers to the way molecules react with other molecules,” Atwood says. “It’s aimed at trying to understand life processes, the way we think, the way we interact with the physical world and what the molecules have to be doing for these processes to occur.”



For his 65th birthday, Jerry Atwood was honored on the May 2008 cover of the New Journal of Chemistry. He has written more than 640 chemistry publications. Photo by Rob Hill

The May 2008 issue of the *New Journal of Chemistry* was dedicated to Atwood for his 65th birthday and his lifelong commitment to the chemical sciences. Throughout his career, he has written more than 640 publications, and his work has appeared on the covers of various academic journals 10 times since 1999. Most impressive, his papers have been cited an astounding 23,000 times, a testament to his work's relevance and excellence.

“Most chemistry papers are published in a journal and no one ever cites them,” Atwood says. “As scientists, we'd like to have lots of people cite our work because that means it's having an impact on science and changing the way people think.”

The citations also bolster a rating known as the Hirsch Index. The H-index ranks international researchers according to the volume of published articles and the number of times those articles are cited, thus measuring a particular scientist's influence.

Jorge Hirsch, physicist and developer of the index, told *Nature* in 2005 that a rating of about 40 represents a top scientist likely to be found at a major research facility.

At age 66, Atwood has an H-index of 78. It's a remarkable achievement for a scientist of any age, particularly one in his 60s.

Atwood is currently doing research with nanocapsules, which could eventually be used for chemotherapy treatment in cancer patients. The goal is for the microscopic capsules to deliver medication directly to cancerous cells, sparing the patient from some of the medication's side effects.

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| E-mail: [Mizzou@missouri.edu](mailto:Mizzou@missouri.edu)

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