

# Computational screening of organic molecules for flow battery applications

Pekka Peljo, Materials Engineering, University of Turku

[pekka.peljo@utu.fi](mailto:pekka.peljo@utu.fi)



## Towards high-throughput screening in CompBat

Imre Papai



# Molecular database

## Computational protocol

- a) **initial 3D structures** – automatic generation of 2D (Lewis) structures (**CombiGlide**), conversion to 3D (**LigPrep**); protonation state at pH = 7 in water (**Epic**); preliminary conformational search with OPLS force field (**Macromodel**)
- b) **conformational analysis** – geometry optimization at semiempirical GFN2-xTB level (**xtb** package); finite temperature and implicit solvent effects (room temperature, water); CREST procedure for extensive conformational search (**crest** utility) → most stable conformers
- c) **electronic energies** – DFT calculations at M06-2X/6-311+G\*\* level (**Gaussian**), single-point calculations in gas- and solution phase (SMD) → aqueous phase solvation free energies
- d) **Gibbs free energies** –  $G_{red/oxid}^{aq} = E_{red/oxid}^{DFT} + \Delta G^{xtb}$  → redox potentials according to the Nernst formula

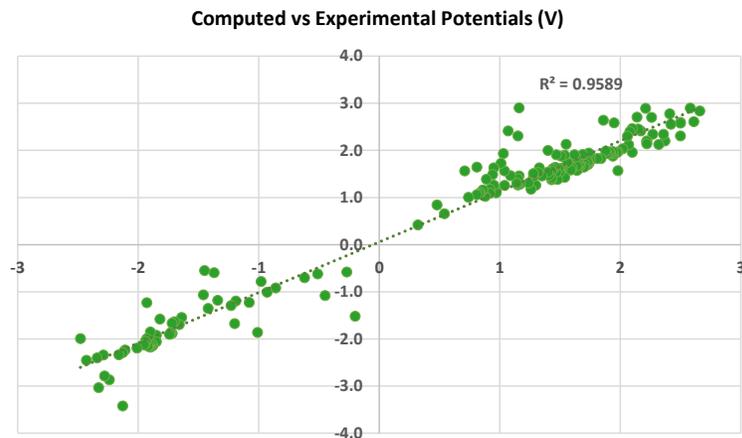
Composite method – force field + semiempirical + accurate QC

Software packages: **Schrödinger**, **xtb**, **Gaussian** + own scripts

# Molecular database

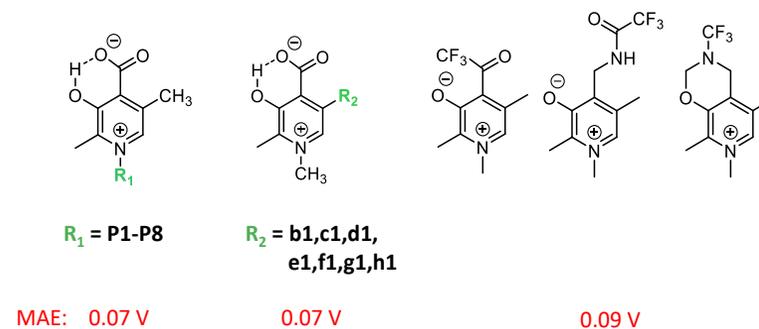
## Test and benchmark calculations

### a) Tests wrt experimental data



188 organic molecules (CV data), MAE = 0.24 V

### b) Benchmarks wrt full DFT data



18 molecules from our database, MAE < 0.1 V

# Molecular database

## Pyridoxal databases

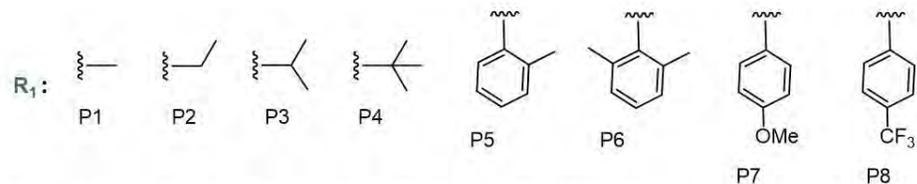
### Latest database

- five pyridoxal frameworks (suggested by JYU)
- $R_1$ ,  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  substituents

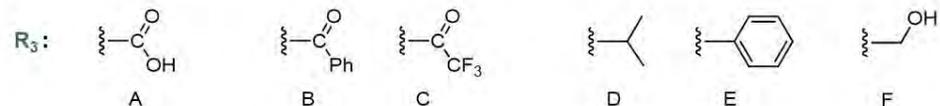


6712 molecules

(for some molecules  
“reactions” are observed)

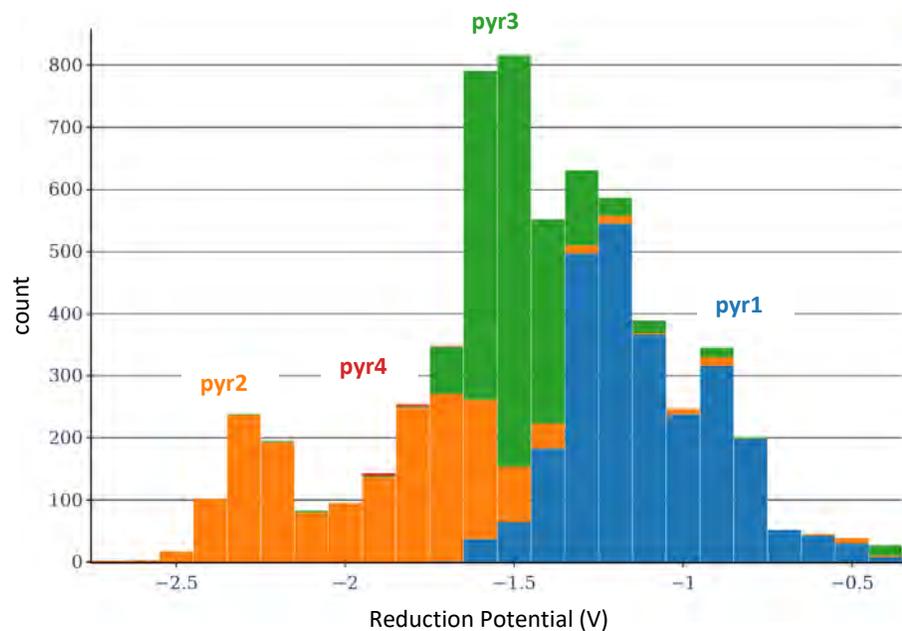


$R_2$ : 113 different substituents (a1, a2, ..., b1, b2, ..., etc)



# Molecular database

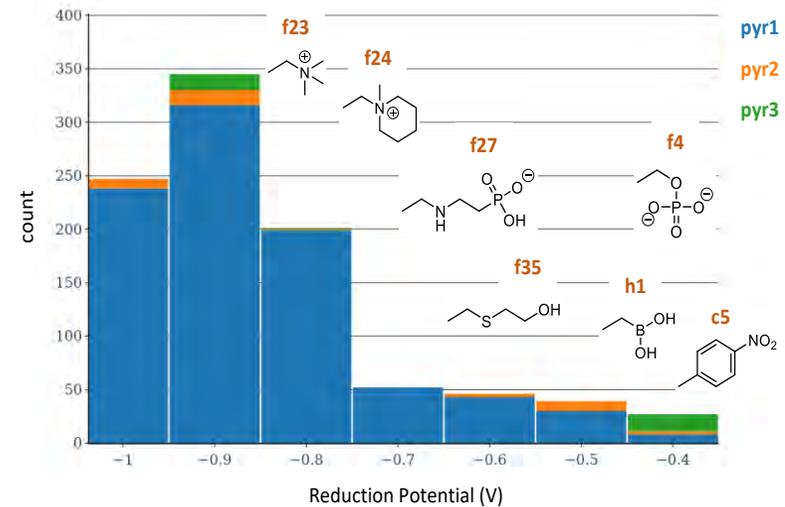
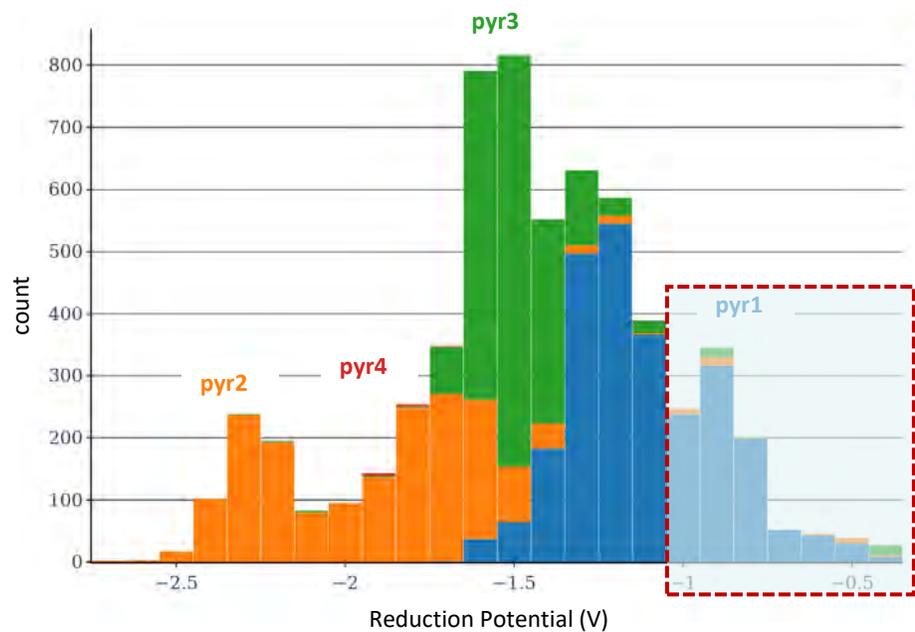
## Reduction potentials



electrochemically relevant range  
(above -1 V) has lower  
populations, where  
almost all compounds are from  
pyr1

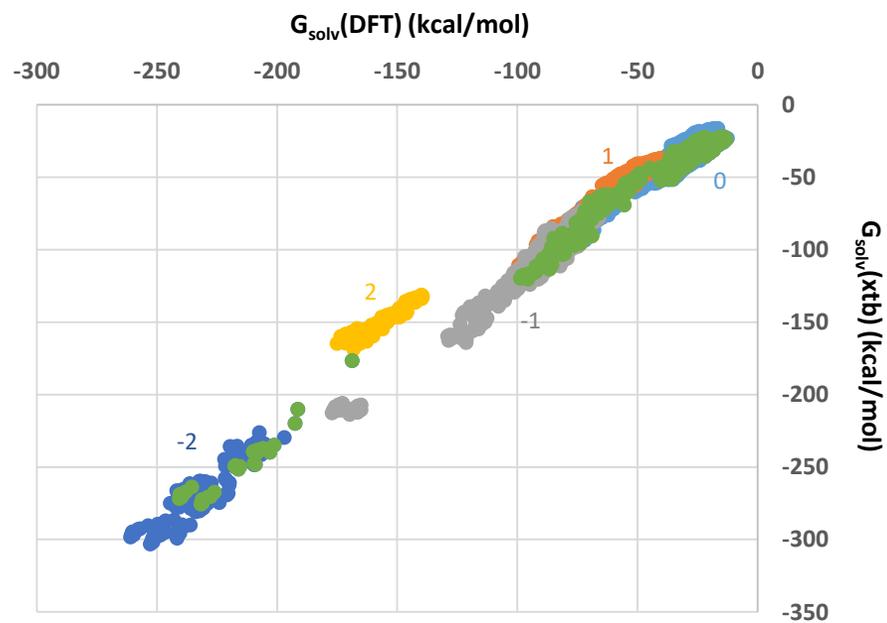
# Molecular database

## Reduction potentials



# Molecular database

## Solvation free energy in aqueous solutions

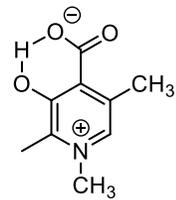


**xTB versus DFT:**  
reasonably good correlation  
→ xtb can be efficiently used

# Machine learning

## Molecular representations

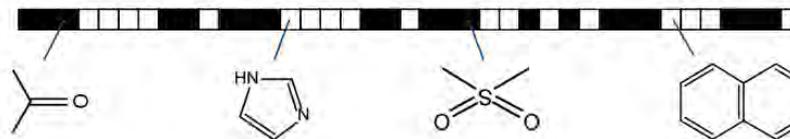
a) SMILES strings



Cc1c[n+](C)c(C)c(O)c1C(=O)[O-] (atoms, bonds, connectivity)

b) fingerprints

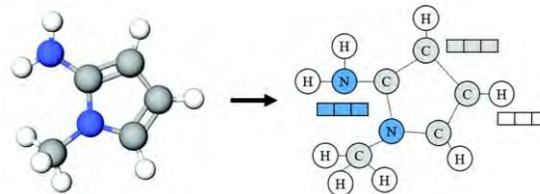
Molecular



(presence or absence of substructures)

c) representation

Graph



(atoms = nodes, bonds = edges  
each node has a feature vector)

# Machine learning

## Machine learning methods

### a) traditional ML methods (Aalto)

- Random Forest analysis followed by SHAP feature attribution analysis



### b) deep-learning methods (TTK)

- convolutional neural networks (CNN)
- extract higher-level features from the raw input
- *DeepChem* ML library via the *Google Colab* service
- collaboration with **Budapest University of Technology**
- 3D graph convolutional network (3DGCN)

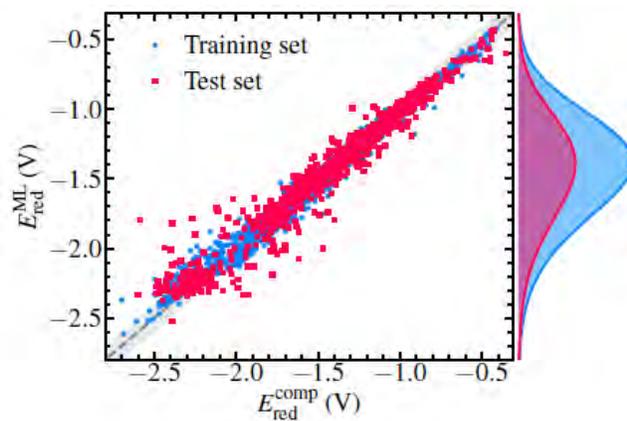


# Machine learning

## RF analysis

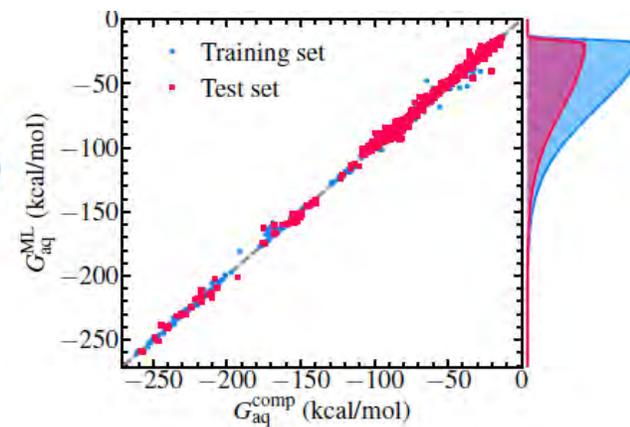
ECFP fingerprints  
training/test 80% +  
20%

potentials



**MAE =  $0.05 \pm 0.01$  V**  
(smaller than the intrinsic  
error)

solubilities



**MAE =  $1.3 \pm 0.1$  kcal/mol**  
(very accurate predictions)

# Machine learning

## Results

Performance of 3 different DeepChem methods for reduction potentials (DB-II)

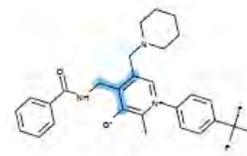
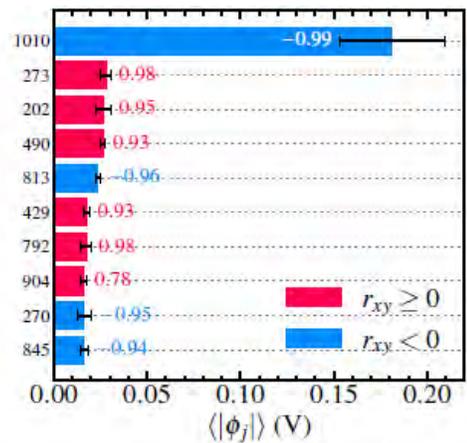
Model	MAE Te	RMSE Tr + V + Te	R <sup>2</sup> Tr + V + Te
TextCNNModel	0.065 ± 0.005	0.062 ± 0.005	0.984 ± 0.001
RobustMultiRegressor	0.061 ± 0.002	0.063 ± 0.006	0.981 ± 0.0003
AttentiveFPModel	0.065 ± 0.006	0.08 ± 0.006	0.972 ± 0.004

(MAE: mean absolute error; RMSE: root mean square error; R<sup>2</sup>: coefficient of determination;  
Tr, V and Te: training, validation and test sets, 80% + 10% + 10%)

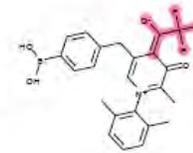
→ good performance, but not better than RF (surprising!)

# Machine learning

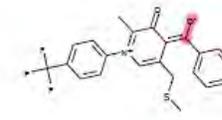
## Feature attribution analysis



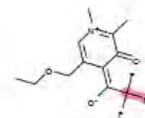
1010



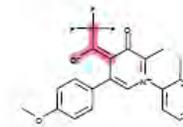
273



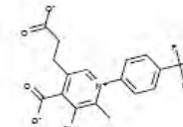
202



429



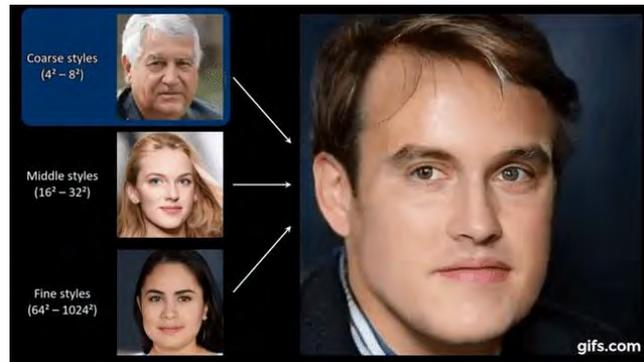
792



904

contribution of different molecular substructures: impact of electron-withdrawing and donating groups

# Is ML a hype?



human faces generated by the GAN

# Participants

Contributors:

Imre Pápai

Andrea Hamza

Ádám Madarász

Flóra Németh



Kari Laasonen

Arsalan Hashemi

Rasmus Kronberg

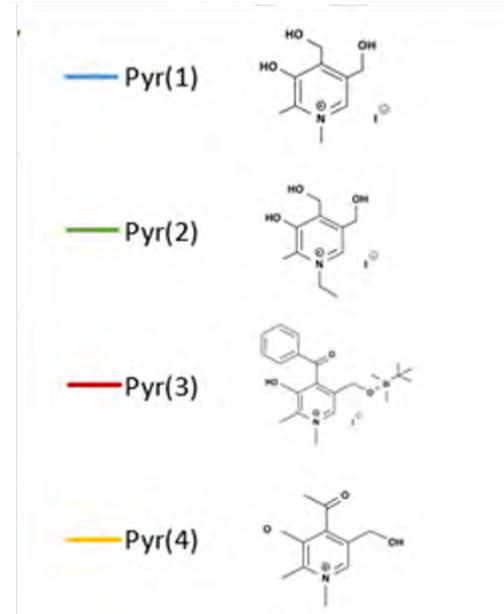
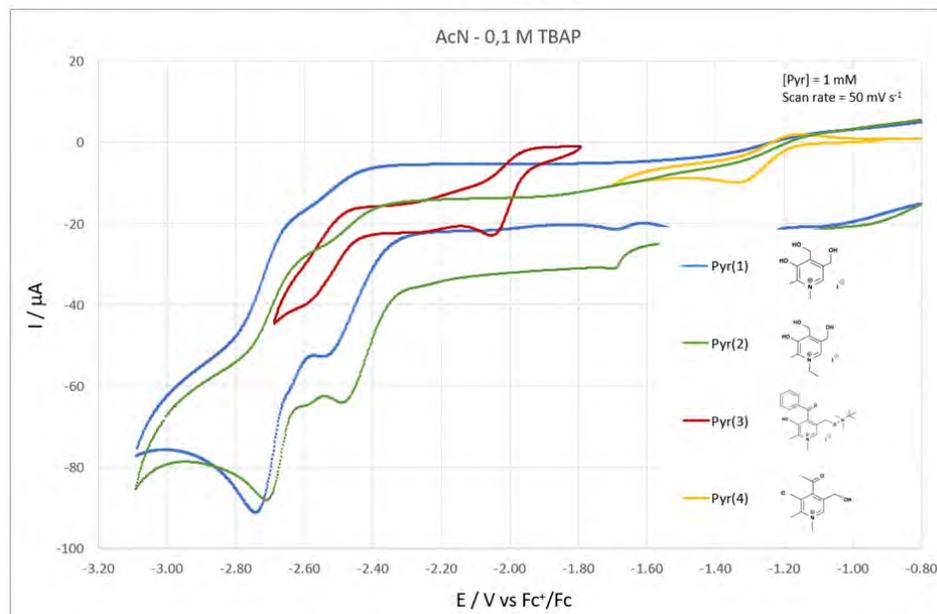
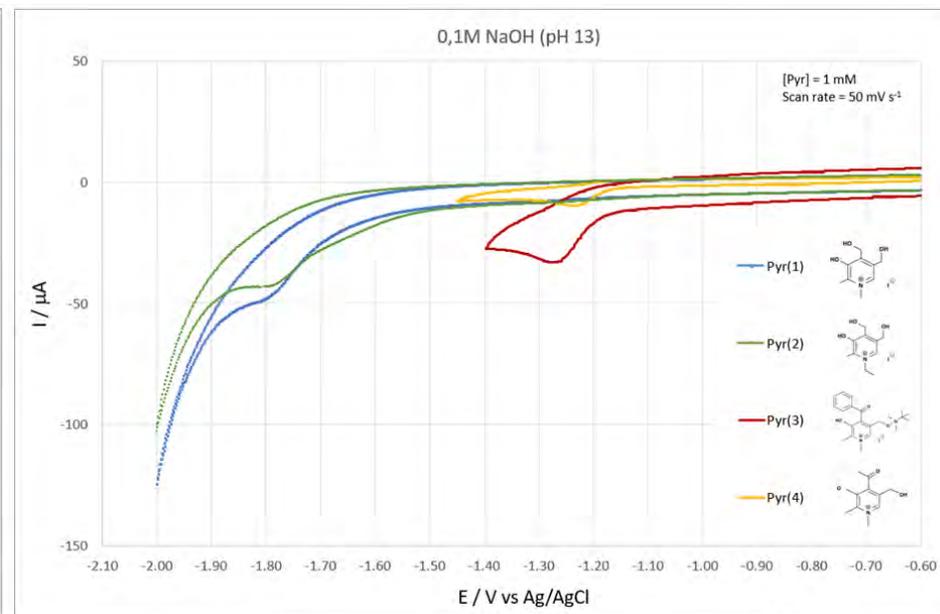
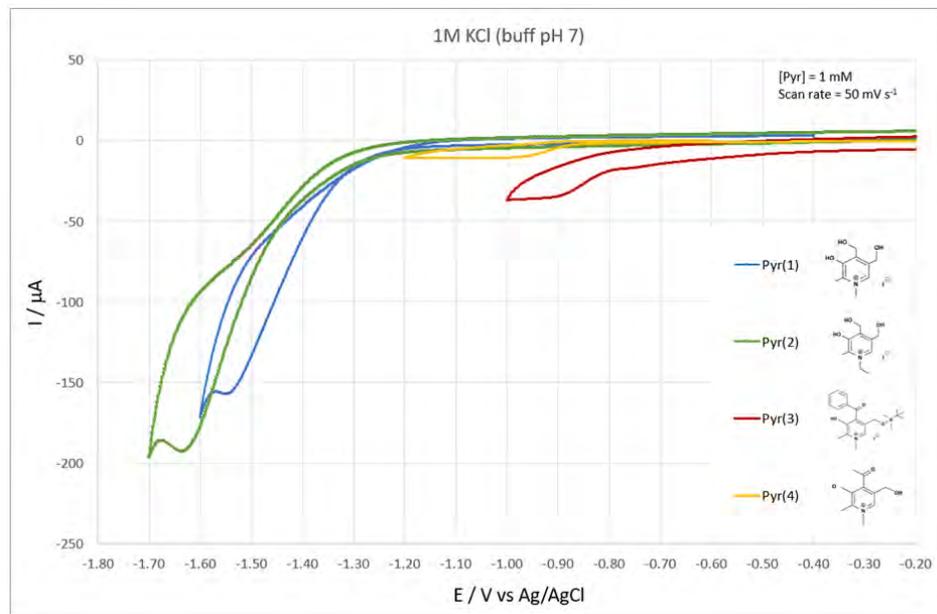


# Organic aqueous batteries

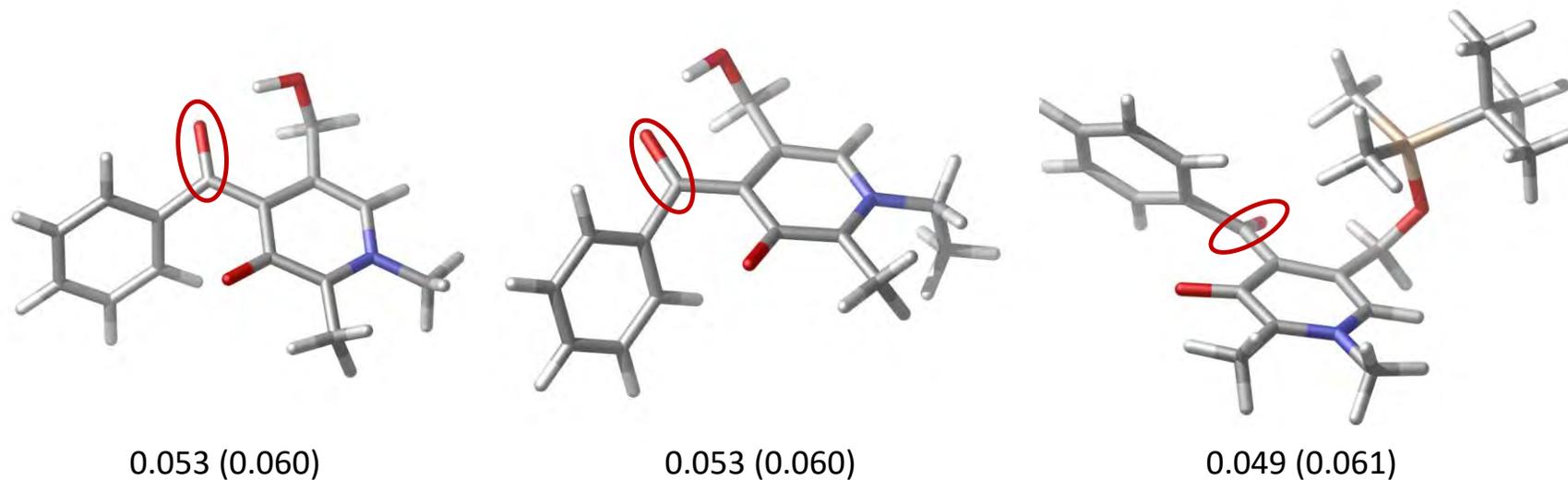
- High-throughput screening is coming
- Cost?
- Stability?

# Issues

- Reproducibility problems
  - Oxygen
  - Cross-over
  - Side reactions, degradation
  - Are results comparable?
- **Stability**
  - Very difficult to evaluate computationally!
  - Reproducible experimental testing needed!
  - Voltammetry is not enough.

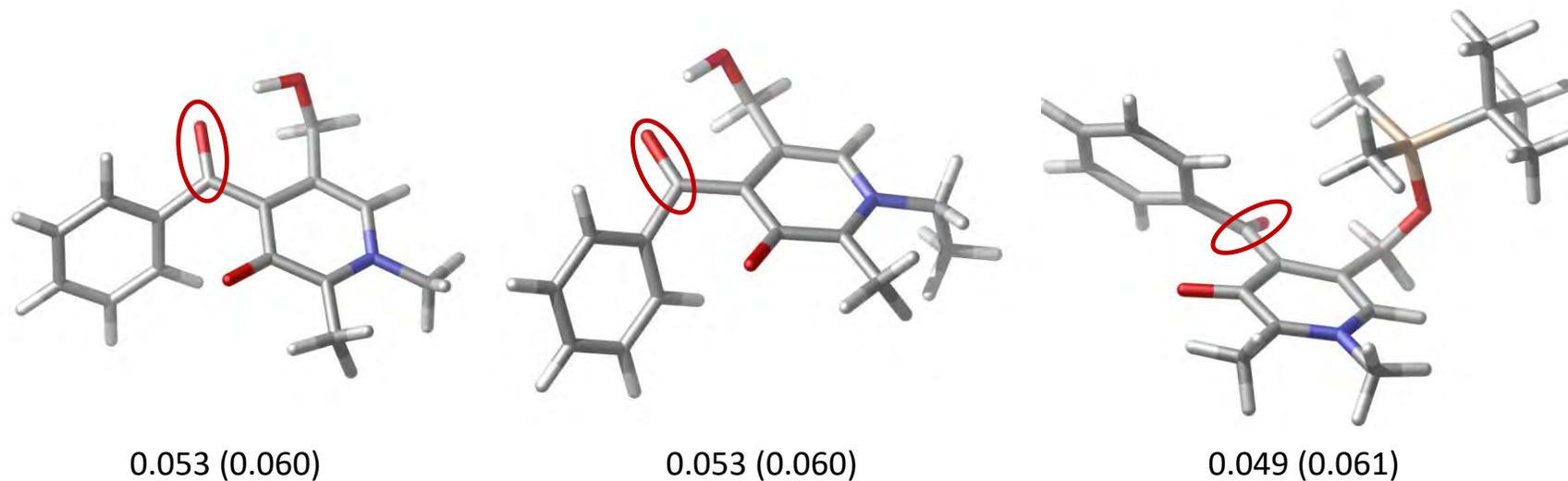


# Computational evaluation of stability



The bond elongations (in Å) for the synthesized molecules. Values obtained from DFT geometry optimizations are shown in parenthesis.

# Computational evaluation of stability



The bond elongations (in Å) for the synthesized molecules. Values obtained from DFT geometry optimizations are shown in parenthesis.

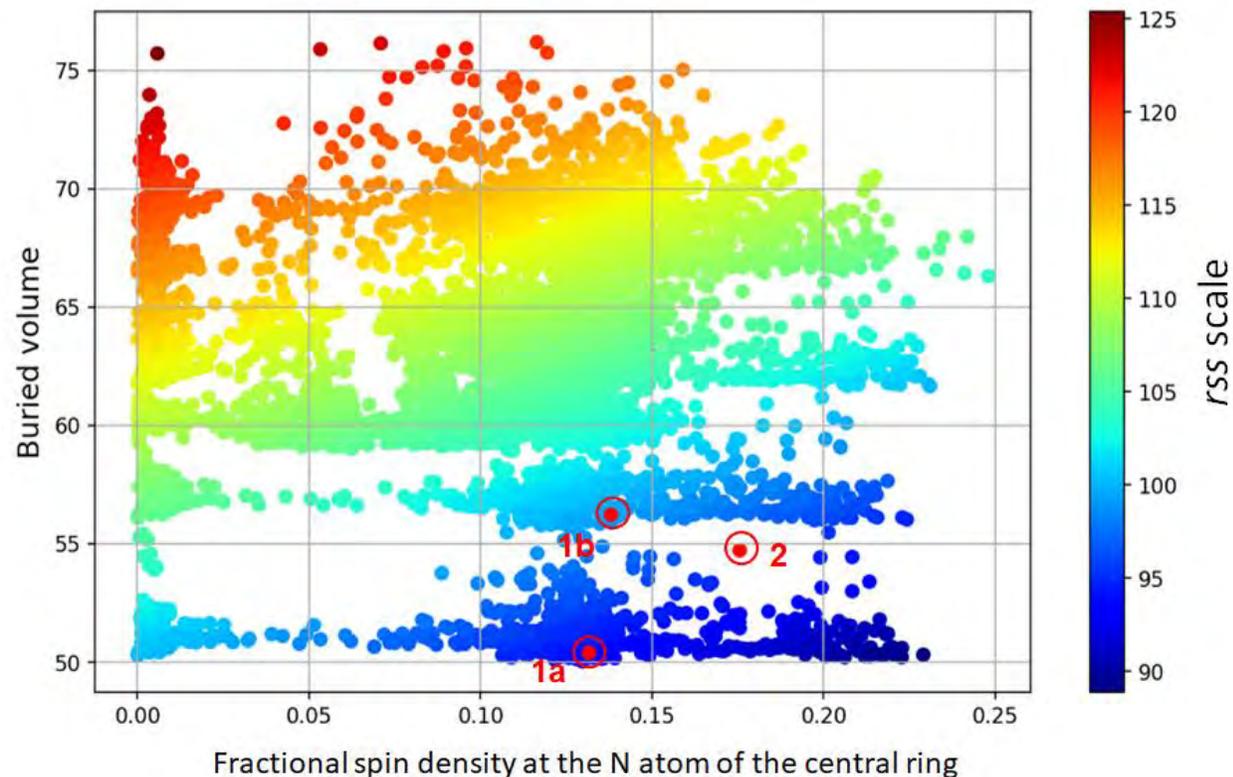
Elongation unlikely to explain instability upon reduction.  
Experimental analysis suggests dimerization.

# Computational evaluation of stability or radicals

- Thermodynamic stability closely related to the degree of electron spin delocalization (via  $\pi$ -conjugation)
- Kinetics influenced by steric effects

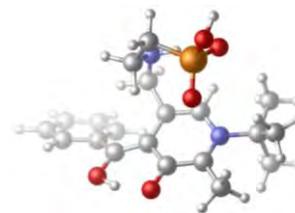
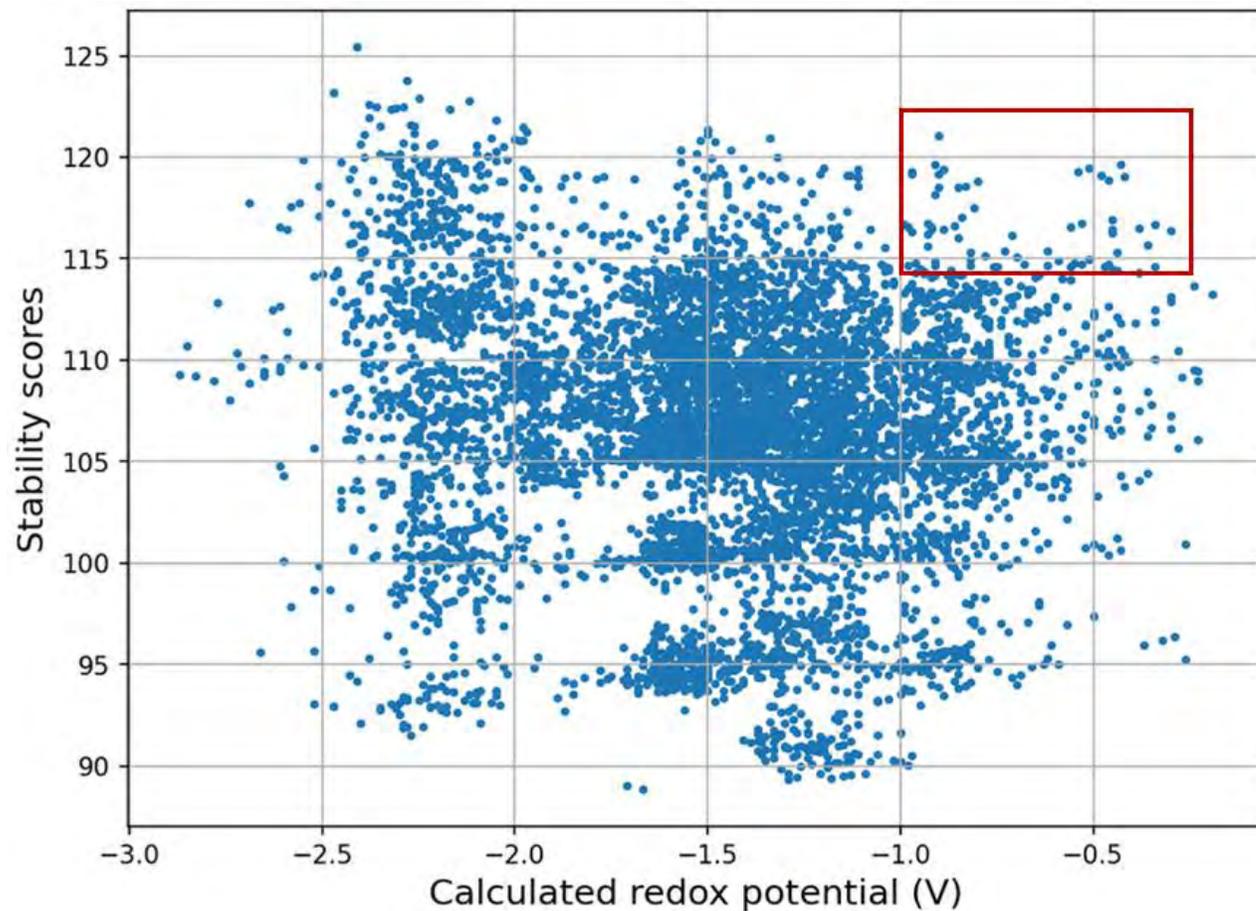
Sowndarya S. V., S.; St. John, P. C.; Paton, R. S. A quantitative metric for organic radical stability and persistence using thermodynamic and kinetic features, *Chem. Sci.*, **2021**, *12*, 13158–13166.

# Radical stability score of CompBat molecules

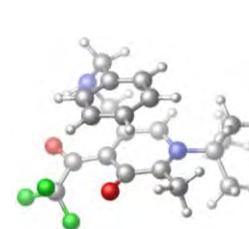


Computed radical stability data for the entire set of radicals included in the DB-II database. Color scale is used for *rss* data (blue – unstable, red – stable radicals).

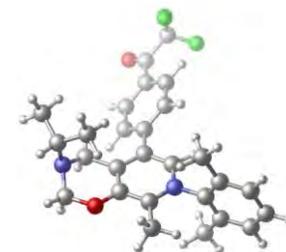
# Radical stability score of CompBat molecules



1335

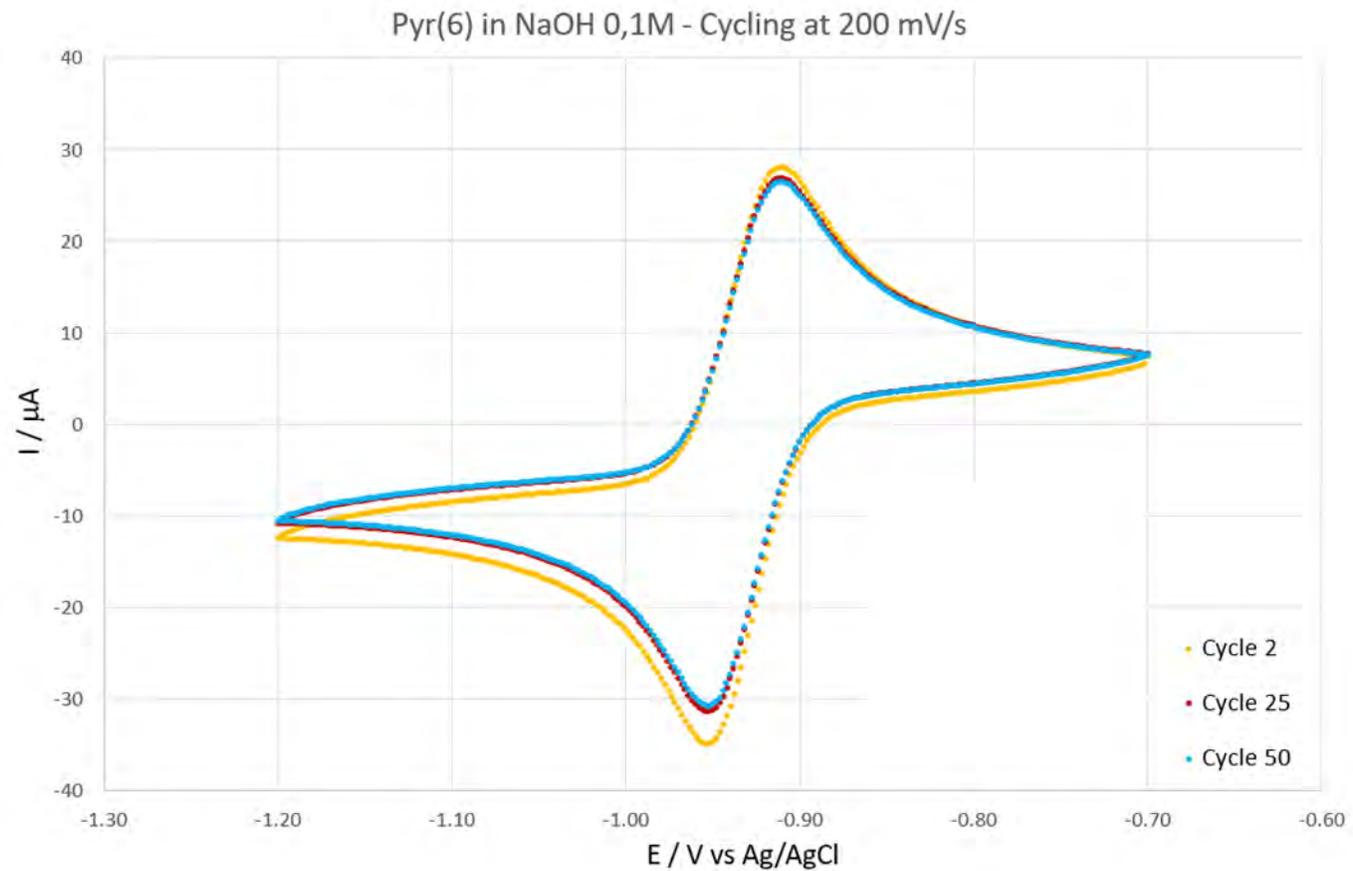


2227



6357

# First stable vitamin B6 based molecule synthesized



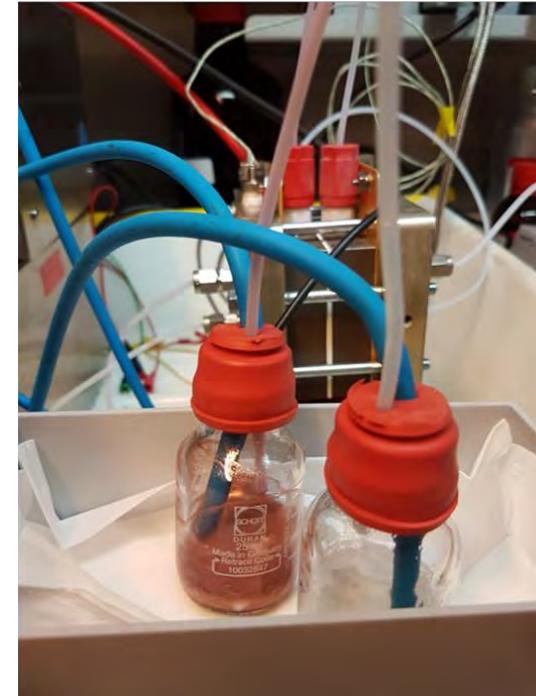
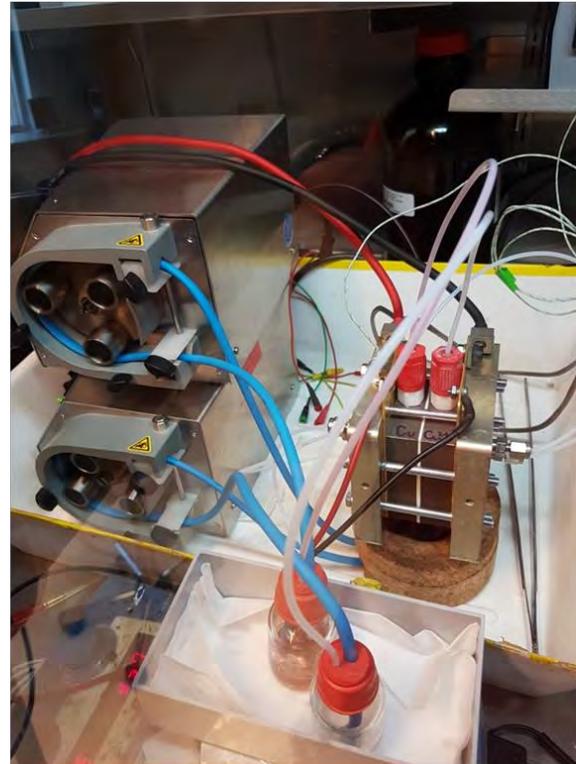
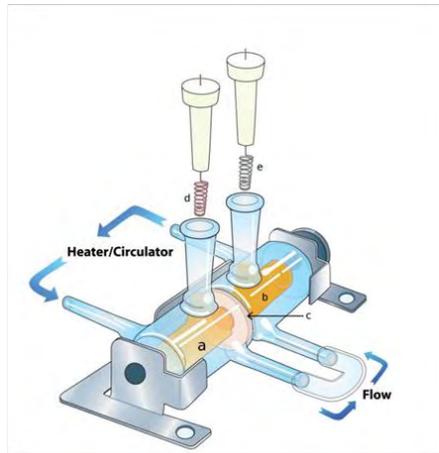
# Open questions

- Computational high-throughput screening
  - For redox potentials and solubility
  - Stability of radicals?
  - Stability of other molecules?
- How to get data for machine learning for design of new materials?
  - Reproducible data
  - High throughput synthesis
  - High throughput testing

# Open questions

- Computational high-throughput screening
  - For redox potentials and solubility
  - Stability?
- How to get data for machine learning for design of new materials?
  - **Reproducible data**
  - **High throughput synthesis**
  - **High throughput testing**

# High-throughput testing?



# High throughput testing for Li-ion batteries

Home Page > What's new in equipment > High Throughput Coin Cell Assembling System Up to 64 Cells Per Hour For Battery Research - MSK-HTBA

## High Throughput Coin Cell Assembling System Up to 64 Cells Per Hour For Battery Research - MSK-HTBA



**Sale Price:** RFQ  
If you are international, please click this.  
**Please email for lead time**  
**Item Number:** MSK-HTBA

[Email this page to a friend](#)



MSK-HTBA is an automatic coin cell assembling system for high throughput battery material research, which can handle 8 kinds of battery cathode and the anode electrode and kinds of electrolytes and assembles 64 cells per hour in dual size glove-box with under controlled atmosphere.

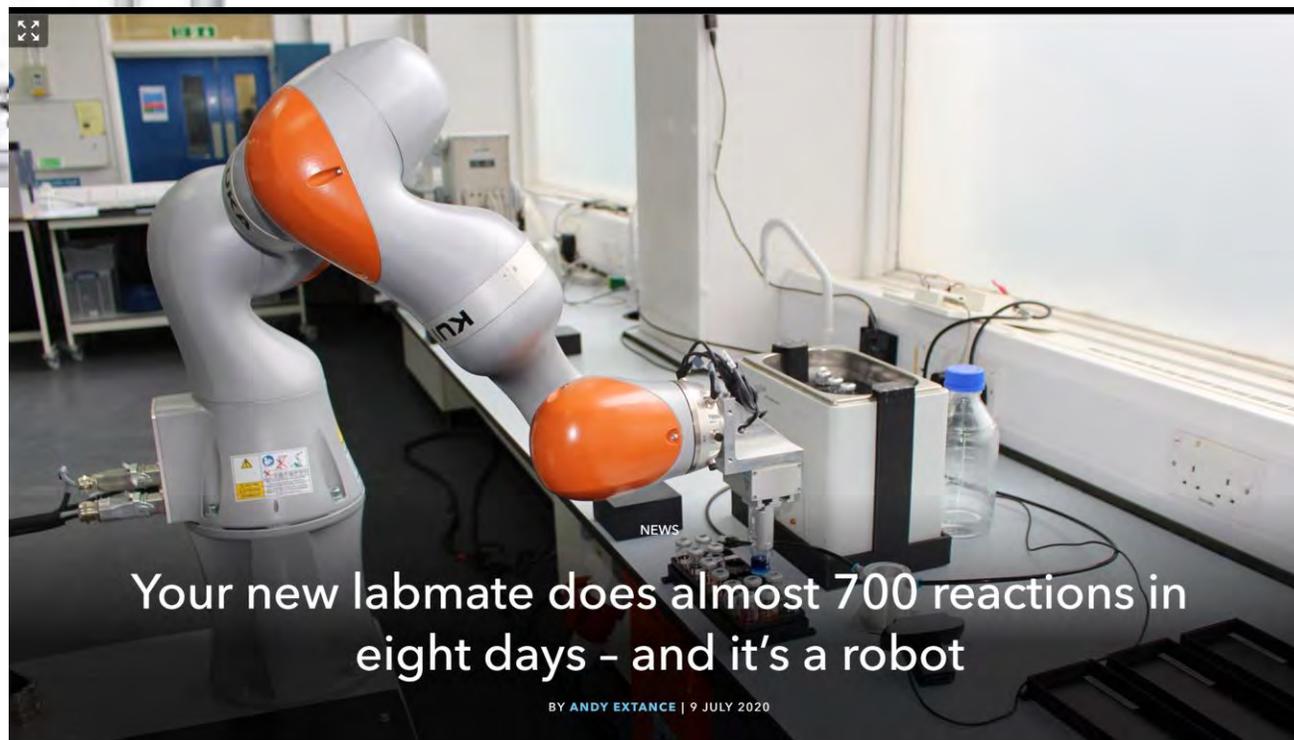
### Features



- High Throughput & Automatically Assembly in the dual size of glove-box with < 1 PPM O<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>O
- CR 2032 Coin Cell or Half Cell
- 8 Kinds of Anode
- 8 Kinds of Cathode
- 2 Kinds of Liquid Electrolyte
- Productivity: ~ 30 PPH
- Product Rate: 98%
- Tracking System







<https://www.chemistryworld.com/news/your-new-labmate-does-700-reactions-in-eight-days-and-its-a-robot/4012125.article>

# Acknowledgements



Research Centre for Natural Sciences, Hungary

**Imre Pápai**  
**Ádám Madarász**  
**Andrea Hamza**  
**Flóra Németh**

**A?** Aalto University, Finland  
**Kari Laasonen et al.**



JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO  
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

**Petri Pihko**  
**Anton Nechaev**



UPPSALA  
UNIVERSITET

**Daniel Brandell**  
**Alexis Rucci**

**Skoltech**

Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology

**Keith Stevenson**  
**Mikhail Pugach et al.**



Università di Pisa  
**Aldo Bichi,**  
**Antonio Bertei et al.**



**UNIVERSITY  
OF TURKU**

**Gabriel Gonzalez**

**combat**

<https://combat.eu/>



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No **875565**.



**UNIVERSITY  
OF TURKU**