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New Chemistry Textbook Offers Instructor a Way to Reach New Audiences

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Web story

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – For Illinois Wesleyan University's James E. House, writing textbooks is more than sharing information, it is the chance to teach students across the nation and around the world. "Last year, I taught at several universities, and the students have never heard my voice," said House, speaking of chemistry textbooks. His latest book, *Inorganic Chemistry* (Academic Press), was published in August and is slated to be used by universities in the spring.

Inorganic Chemistry is House's fourth textbook in seven years. A second edition of his *Principles of Chemical Kinetics* (Academic Press) came out last summer, another second edition, *Fundamentals of Quantum Mechanics* (Academic Press), was published in 2005, and *Descriptive Inorganic Chemistry* (Brooks Cole) was released in 2001. "People ask me why I am writing these books and I tell them that I guess it's because I can," said House, who has been teaching chemistry for more than 40 years, and joined the Illinois Wesleyan Chemistry Department as an adjunct faculty member in 1997. "I've seen a lot of textbooks through my years, and I thought maybe it was time to give my views on some topics."

House admits there are many chemistry books from which professors can choose. "The content of many chemistry textbooks reflects standards put in place by the American Chemical Society," said House. "But when it comes to textbooks, there is a lot of flexibility in the choice of topics and how they are arranged." His newest book includes some unusual topics, such as a chapter on dynamic processes in solids. "That's coming from my interest in kinetics. I don't know of any other inorganic textbook containing a chapter on that area," he said.

Material for his books come directly from his work in the classroom and as a kinetics consultant. As a consultant, House has helped to model reactions important in the sweetener industries. "I developed the kinetic model that made it possible to dry dextrose sweetener to the right composition to keep pre-sweetened Kool-Aid from clumping in the package," he said. "It sounds like an odd solid state process, but it's important for the industry," said House.