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Sommario/riassunto	Since the first use of synchrotron light to investigate the properties of materials half a century ago, it has become increasingly recognized as an invaluable research tool by a broad spectrum of scientists, ranging from physicists and chemists, through molecular biologists and environmental scientists, to geologists and archaeologists. This rising demand for access to synchrotron radiation has also expressed itself in a recent increase in the construction of facilities worldwide to accommodate this diverse and burgeoning user community. Modern synchrotron facilities are therefore one of the p