

Foreword

This special issue is a collection of 26 papers from a group of laboratories located in LYON (France), and all supported by the CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique). These laboratories are cooperating and share important polymer characterization instruments. The network is coordinated by Professor J. P. Pascault.

The entire network includes 60 scientists for a total of about 180 people including post-docs, students, and technicians. Four laboratories are devoted to the study of polymeric materials: the laboratory of the University of Lyon (Prof. B. Chabert—30 people) and two laboratories of the School of Engineering (Institut National des Sciences Appliquées): Professor J. P. Pascault (30 people) and Professor J. Perez (20 people), and the laboratory of Organic Materials (Speciality polymers) of the CNRS in Vernaison (Dr. B. Sillion (40 people). Another laboratory, located at the School of Chemistry, Physics and Electronics (CPE Lyon) is interested in both the chemistry and the chemical engineering of polymerization processes (Dr. R. Spitz \approx 40 people). And, finally,

a joint venture between the CNRS and Biomérieux (Dr. Pichot, with 20 people) is working on polymer supports for bioreagents in diagnostics, and is located at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Lyon.

Most of the important topics of polymer science are covered by the network. Traditional areas of activity of these groups are Ziegler catalysts for olefin polymerization, emulsion polymerization, chemistry and material properties of epoxies and polyurethanes, the degradation and stabilization of PVC, composite materials and interfaces, thermostable polymers, and the modeling of thermal and mechanical properties of polymers. However, in the last five years, a set of new topics have been added, such as ring opening polymerization, hybrid materials, reactive processing, rheological properties of suspensions and melts, and polymer supported reagents.

Although this special issue does not discuss all these topics, it gives a rather good idea of the expertise of the different laboratories of the network.

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