
Editorial

The collection of papers that form this issue of *Journal of Materials Chemistry* was presented at the First Materials Chemistry Discussion, MD1, held at the Institut de Chimie de la Matière Condensée, Bordeaux, France on September 24–26, 1998. Papers were submitted and refereed in the usual way and then issued as preprints to delegates in advance of the meeting. At the meeting, authors were given just 5 minutes to summarise the keypoints of their papers (10 minutes for the review papers and 50 minutes for the overview paper by C. N. R. Rao) so that most of the time could be devoted to discussion.

The format and philosophy of the meeting was based on the very well-established and successful Faraday Discussions on topics in physical chemistry which the Royal Society of Chemistry has organised for over half a century. Nevertheless, for almost all of the delegates, this was a new-style meeting and therefore something of an experiment. In contrast to normal practice with Faraday Discussions, it was decided not to make a written record of all the discussion comments, in part because this would have delayed final publication of these papers by several months.

Participants at the meeting will have obtained their own personal benefits from listening to, and taking part in, the

many discussions. We hope that, in addition, this collection of papers will reach a wider community and will serve as a state-of-the-art overview of the wide diversity of methods that are now available to synthesise solids, both purely inorganic solids and composite solids that have a molecular or organic component. Sometimes, these methods are used to synthesise known solids by alternative routes, which may give advantages in terms of cost, purity or versatility in the form of the final product. Or they may be used to synthesise entirely new materials, many of which are thermodynamically metastable and cannot be prepared by conventional 'beat and heat' routes.

It was abundantly clear from the very extensive discussion of some of the papers at the meeting that the synthesis procedures and the characterisation problems for some solids are still evolving subjects and that the whole area of synthesis and characterisation of solids is very much at the forefront of research into materials chemistry. It is hoped to return to these, and other areas of interest and controversy, in future meetings of this MD series.

At the beginning of the meeting, Raymond Brec paid a personal tribute to Jean Rouxel, the text of which follows this editorial.

Anthony R. West

Jean Etourneau