Editorial

This Special Issue of the Journal of Materials Chemistry contains all the contributions forming part of the programme of the 3rd Materials Discussion Meeting entitled ''Inorganic solids—Properties and Possibilities'' held at Churchill College, Cambridge from 26–29 September 2000.

The Materials Discussions sponsored by the Royal Society of Chemistry borrow from the well tried formula pioneered for the last century by the Faraday Discussions. After the normal refereeing process papers on the topic of the meeting are circulated in advance to those attending, to give them the opportunity to review the subject material and formulate any questions. At the meeting itself, only a brief period is allotted to the author's presentation, so that much more time can be given to discussion of the points made: hence the 'Discussion' title of the series. Many years of experience have shown that such an arrangement enables participants to explore in depth the finer points of the author's arguments, and to subject them to searching appraisal. A synoptic, but necessarily truncated, account of the discussion is contributed by J. P. Attfield, to whom warmest thanks are due, not only for that, but for the key part he played in organising the meeting itself.

Though a young science, materials chemistry has already (though imperfectly) subdivided itself into two aspects: those substances that are molecular in make up, such as polymers, colloids, liquid crystals and molecular electronic materials, and those of a continuous lattice type, in which no molecular entities can be discerned in the crystal. The present Materials Discussion concentrates strongly on the latter, and indeed, the Materials Editorial Board has decided that in general these two strands of our discipline should alternate in providing topics for Materials Discussions.

In the present Discussion, as Dr. Attfield's summary shows, we find a 'snapshot' of the state of inorganic materials chemistry at the turn of the millennium. New solid architectures are of the essence, and they range from micro- and mesoporous solids to ones synthesised for their potential optical, electronic or magnetic properties. In each category, new horizons are being opened up by the skills of chemists, who are also devoting themselves to understanding the all important, but sometimes still unexpected, connections between structures and properties. The breadth and potential of the field is amply demonstrated by the papers in this issue. My thanks, as Scientific Advisory Editor, go to the authors and other contributors to such a successful Discussion.

Professor Peter Day