
Preface

Welcome to the Reader!

You, the reader, hold in your hands a valuable journal issue that contains a number of thermal analysis papers that were presented at the 32nd annual meeting of the North American Thermal Analysis Society (NATAS). This conference was held in Williamsburg, Virginia, USA from the October 4 to 6, 2004. NATAS is known of its dedication in promoting the understanding and advancement of thermal analysis. NATAS is the largest national thermal analysis society in the world, and over its more than 30 year existence, it has represented the interests of numerous scientists, technicians and engineers, as well as major instrument vendors functioning in the area of thermal analysis. NATAS is an affiliate of the International Confederation for Thermal Analysis and Calorimetry (ICTAC), and has been co-operating with ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) for a long time especially Committee E37 on Thermal Measurements.

The Short Course in Thermal Analysis held right before the conference, provide excellent educational opportunities for technical people, both experienced in the use of thermal analysis and those expanding their skills to learn thermal analysis.

In this year's program, by our count, 225 papers were presented in nineteen different sessions (Kinetics; Fast Scan DSC; Semicrystalline Polymers; Thermal Conductivity; Pharmaceuticals; Poster Session; Educational Applications; Thermoplastic Polymers; Combined and Hyphenated Techniques; Composites, Nanocomposites and Thermosets; Thermal Hazards/Energetic Materials; Wood Materials; Rheology; Foods; Professional Enhancement; General Session; Flame Retardancy; Films and Fibers; Medical Polymers). Although thermal analysis is present in all areas of chemistry, the just described list of 2004 NATAS sessions clearly indicates that polymers still represent the majority among the materials tested by thermal analysis, or at least by the NATAS membership. Another phenomenon that may be seen when comparing these papers with earlier NATAS issues is some structural change in the type of the papers. As the chemical industry is inevitably being transformed in the era of globalization, it also affects thermal analysis. The emphasis is shifted from theoretical papers more to applications of thermal analysis.

This special issue contains selected papers from the 2004 Annual NATAS Meeting. Another group of selected papers will be published in *Thermochimica Acta*. You may be surprised to see the NATAS material collected in two special issues of the two thermal analysis journals. However, NATAS has now decided it is time to return to the good old times and publish together the selected papers presented at its annual meeting. This year was a trial year of how the best NATAS papers should be presented to the world. The 2005 NATAS papers will be published in one special issue of *Journal of Thermal Analysis and Calorimetry*.

At the annual NATAS meetings, in addition to the classical conference, there is always an instrument exhibition of a considerable size. The most important instrument manufacturers of the world are always present at this exhibition. In addition of being present, they provide funding to NATAS through financing some of the essential needs of the conference. Thus, we sincerely thank the following NATAS conference sponsors for their support: TA Instruments, PerkinElmer Life and Analytical Sciences and Mettler-Toledo. We are also thankful to both symposia sponsors: ExxonMobil Chemical Company and Abbott Laboratories. We hope the excellent relationship between NATAS and its corporate sponsors, and the instrument vendors is permanent. Above all, we thank all the authors and reviewers for their valuable contribution, because we feel that re-starting of regular publishing of the papers of the annual NATAS meetings is extremely important. We express our gratitude to the editorial offices of both *Journal of Thermal Analysis and Calorimetry*, and *Thermochimica Acta* for providing the opportunity to publish these papers.

Guest Editors

Acknowledgements

The Guest Editors are thankful to the following scientists whose critical reviews have significantly contributed to the high scientific level of this chapter.

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