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### Editorial

David Dunmur

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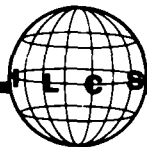
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# Liquid Crystals

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**TODAY**

## EDITORIAL

### Professor David Dunmur

**T**his issue of *Liquid Crystals Today* will appear after the 16th International Liquid Crystal Conference, held at Kent State University from 24–28 June, and a full Conference Report will be published in the next issue. Now attention will be directed towards the next ILCCs in 1998 (Strasbourg, France) and 2000 (Sendai, Japan). Each of the ILCCs provides an opportunity to review the past and look to the future, but liquid-crystal-ball gazing is notoriously difficult, perhaps due to the inherent diffuse scattering always present.

A look back for *Liquid Crystals Today* will remind that the new expanded format has now been around for 18 months, and the association with Taylor and Francis continues to flourish to the clear benefit of the society. A consequence of this association is, of course, that the Editorial Board of *Liquid Crystals Today* must take account of commercial pressures – colour illustrations are expensive – and to retain the attractive features of our Newsletter in every issue requires finance. The Board is exploring means to achieve this, but the real challenge is to ensure that *Liquid Crystals Today* provides a service to its readers and subscribers. The service is of course to inform, but we wish to develop the information aspect more towards promoting liquid crystals to a wider audience, both within liquid crystal science and beyond to a more general public. With the latter in mind the Educational Column was introduced, and hopefully some of the ideas presented there will be incorporated into education programmes around the world.

As with all of science now, liquid crystal science must be seen to be paying its way in terms of wealth creation and the establishment of new industrial technologies. There is no shortage of possible new products and ideas for products, but the problems of developing these into new technologies are prodigious. There can be no doubt that LCDs have revolutionized the impact of IT – the lap-top computer could not exist without LCDs – but we are still a long way from achieving the real potential of multi-media IT available to all at anytime and anywhere on the globe. The Internet provides an undreamed-of source of information, as more and more publications appear on the WWW, but the information display still leaves much to be desired. Who will read a manuscript, a novel or a textbook on screen – the printer still takes pride of place, and much of the cost of our IT systems. Once again the sophistication of information transfer has exceeded the capacity of the technology to display the results. The solution is of course simple: an A4 or similar display, the size of a magazine, responding at up to a page per second, with full colour and video frame–frame rate if required, and all powered by a long-life battery weighing just a few grams. Unfortunately such a display is not yet available, but who can doubt that only liquid crystals have the capability to deliver this technology. The question is not 'if', but 'when', and this is the message that must be delivered to the public which demands the ultimate from its technology. We want *Liquid Crystals Today* to play its part in delivering this message, but we need the support of and contributions from liquid crystal scientists who continue to expose the mysteries and marvels of liquid crystals.

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