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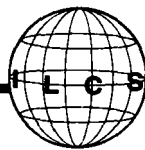
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Liquid Crystals

TODAY

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EDITORIAL

Liquid Crystals Tomorrow

This issue of Liquid Crystals Today is slimmer than usual, and so provides an excuse for an editorial. Copy for Liquid Crystals Today comes through a variety of channels: some items are sent unsolicited to the editor or members of the editorial board, while feature articles are often written as a result of one of the editorial team reading or hearing about some new development in liquid crystal science. The flow of contributions is, therefore, random, and one of the tasks of the editor is to try to ensure that, from this random flow, a steady stream of high quality material emerges to coincide with the publication dates. This time it hasn't happened, so rather than wait for articles in the pipe-line, we have decided to publish a thin edition of Liquid Crystals Today. We do have some excellent articles being prepared, and we expect to publish an extended edition next time to include these.

From next year, the publication of Liquid Crystals Today will be electronic, under the guidance of a new editorial team. In this new format, publication dates become of less importance, and it will be possible to adjust to a more chaotic input of liquid crystal science and news items. The progress of science does not follow a simple linear function, and so electronic publication, unconstrained as it is by page limits and copy dates, will

be ready to bring you articles of interest and up-to-the-minute information.

There is another aspect to the apparent slump in feature articles for Liquid Crystals Today. This is the ever present problem of trying to maintain a multi-disciplinary perspective to liquid crystal science. Now that liquid crystals are established as worthy of research in condensed matter physics, display physics, new materials and surface physics and chemistry, there is a danger that we all become focused on our own specialities and lose the time and/or interest to maintain a broad knowledge of the field. A consequence is that communication between disciplines is reduced, and the subject of liquid crystal science becomes absorbed into the traditional areas of mathematics, physics and chemistry. Such a development would be immensely damaging, and would be counter to the traditions of liquid crystal scientists and a step backwards in terms of the new demands being placed upon science by society. For example in the United Kingdom a Government review of research funding has been instituted, and one aspect which will be examined is the desirability of maintaining funding to traditional areas of science. The perception is that such funding arrangements have starved multidisciplinary studies, which perhaps have more to offer society in the 21st Century.

Few areas of science have attracted such a range of disciplines as liquid crystals. Furthermore, there must be very few areas in which synthetic chemists will read and

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appreciate the work of mathematicians, while at the same time being aware of and understanding addressing sequences for complex displays. As a community, we lose these wide perspectives at our peril. Increasingly, there are specialist conferences on different aspect of liquid crystal science, e.g. optics, pattern formation, defects, metallomesogens, rheology and surface science. Of course, there is a need for such meetings to consider the detailed aspects of the subject, but it would be more than just a pity if, by focusing on detail, we neglect to maintain the integrity of the subject of liquid crystal science. The full flavour of the subject is exposed at the International Conferences and through such publications as Liquid Crystals Today, and it is to be hoped that these will continue to receive the support and encouragement of all liquid crystal scientists.