

## SPECIALITY POLYMERS '88

This issue of POLYMER contains all the accepted papers from the 3rd International Conference on New Polymeric Materials held at Cambridge, UK—Speciality Polymers'88. The two previous conferences were held at Birmingham, UK, in '84 and Baltimore, US, in '86. The timing of these conferences has picked up very well the resurgence of synthetic activity on new polymers in this decade, and their increasing importance as a low volume, high added value segment in the polymer industry which complements the high tonnage, low margin core of the industry.

The organizers sought papers originally under three headings: high performance polymers, electroactive materials and polymers in extreme environments.

The first two were well subscribed and the electroactive papers included a strong section on ionic conductivity. However very few papers were offered on polymers in extreme environments. Perhaps we drew this section too narrowly. Certainly a key issue now is polymeric materials and the environment, though hardly at all in extreme conditions. Environmentally compatible packaging is a major discussion topic between polymer suppliers and users which could lead to interesting developments in tailoring conventional polymers as well as heralding an upsurge of interest in naturally biodegradable derivatives of cellulose.

The two major themes were each supported by papers presented to a good professional standard describing latest results. And there were some outstanding plenary lectures, most notably the ones by Professor Lewis and by Professor Gray. This said, each theme followed well established patterns and there did not seem to be evidence of breaks through.

High performance polymer sessions were mainly devoted to chemical extensions of already familiar themes based on chemical structure—physical property relationships or the technologies they are intended to serve. There is scope in future conferences to bring in processing problems presented by these new materials and to open up the technical features of fabricated forms.

Much the same could be said of the electroactive sessions, though here it was pleasing to see a strong session on ionic conduction. The real test of a speciality polymer is its performance in a special application. Chemical synthesis and characterization are only the first steps realizing the ultimate performance of the material in its intended use. Physicists are already involved in characterization, they need to extend their interests with engineers into fabrication problems and opportunities based on the design of the ultimate component or device.

With an attendance of over 350 delegates this was the largest conference so far in the series; it was also the most lively. I am sure we all look forward to the next meeting planned for 1990 at The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA.

Sir Geoffrey Allen

## SPECIALITY POLYMERS '90

Following the huge success of Speciality Polymers '88—over 350 delegates attended—we are returning to the States for Speciality Polymers '90. This will be the fourth international conference in this popular biennial series, and will be held on

8–10 August 1990  
at The Johns Hopkins University,  
Baltimore, Maryland, USA

The topics selected for discussion are:

- electro-optic polymers
- highly ordered fibres and films

Papers are now invited for Speciality Polymers '90. To obtain the First Circular and Call for Papers please contact:

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