Yves Termonia (left) and Georg H. Michler receive the Paul J. Flory Polymer Research Prize from Ram Prakash Singh, chair of the prize committee.

Polymer Characterization and Advanced Materials

by M. Hess

It seems that some things never change, and in that good tradition, the **11th POLYCHAR** was held 7–10 January 2003 at the University of North Texas, Denton, Texas, where it has been held for the past 11 years. The conference, sponsored by IUPAC for the third successive time, was preceded by the Short Course in Polymer Characterization (held on 6 January), which received support from IUPAC's Macromolecular Division.

POLYCHAR originally stood for International Conference on Polymer Characterization, but several years ago it had adopted the broader title "World Forum on Polymer Application and Theory." This has been further modified to "World Forum on Advanced Materials" in recognition of the importance of polymers in highly sophisticated materials that have a broad range of applications such as drug modification through nano-composites, structure development in processing, and enzymatic catalysis in macromolecular chemistry. Also, for some years the conference proceedings have found their home in the journal *Materials Research Innovations*, indicating the strong focus on polymer systems as advanced materials.

After 11 meetings, always very effectively organized by Witold Brostow and his team at the UNT, the Scientific Committee has now decided to start moving the conference to different locations in the world, stressing its character as a real world forum. Consequently, the next conference, POLYCHAR 12, will be hosted by Antonio Cunha at the University of Minho, Guimaraes, Portugal.

POLYCHAR 11 had about 120 registered participants from approximately 40 countries. Fifty-one countries were represented on POLYCHAR's Scientific Committee. The conference's philosophy is not to aim for high numbers of participants, but rather to foster intensive discussions, contact between scientists, and, in particular, to give young scientists a forum for making presentations and contacts. Hence, there were no parallel sessions and many opportunities for discussions between lectures. Each participant was able to submit a manuscript for publication in *Materials Research Innovations* after review by two referees.

The areas covered by POLYCHAR 11 were as follows:

- predictive methods
- synthesis
- nanohybrids and nanotechnology
- mechanical properties and performance
- dielectric and electric properties
- surfaces, interfaces, and tribology
- rheology, solutions, and processing
- characterization and structure-property relationships
- recycling

The full program can be viewed at <www.unt.edu/POLYCHAR>.

In former POLYCHAR conferences there were many contributions dealing with polymer liquid crystals. These materials no longer have their own section and have been consumed by sections like mechanical properties and performance or rheology, solutions, and processing. On the other hand, the field of nanocomposites and nanotechnology is presently very active and provided a section with many challenging contributions.

Several prizes were awarded at POLYCHAR 11. The Paul J. Flory Polymer Research Prize was awarded jointly to Georg H. Michler (Martin Luther University, Merseburg, Germany) and Yves Termonia (E.I. du Pont de Nemours, Inc., Delaware, USA). The Bruce Hartman Award for Young Investigators was awarded to Dorota Pietkiewicz of the University of North Texas, Denton. The Carl Klason Award for the Best Student Paper was was given Li Si Wan of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. A Diploma of Distinction for a Student Presentation was awarded to John B. White of the University of North Texas and to Gerard Denis of the University of Rouen.

The 12th Annual POLYCHAR World Forum on Advanced Materials (POLYCHAR-12) will take place at the University of Minho, Guimaraes, Portugal, from 6–9 January 2004. It will be preceded by the 12th Course on Polymer Characterization on 5 January 2004.

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