

Conference Call

Polymer Gels and Networks

by Miroslava Duskova and Michal Ilavsky

Polymer Gels and Networks was the 44th Microsymposium in the series of Prague Meetings on Macromolecules. The conference, organized by the Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, took place in Prague from 10–14 July 2005—a fitting tribute to the 75th birthday of Prof. Karel Dusek. The event was sponsored by IUPAC, the Polymer Networks Group, and NANOFUN-POLY, the European Network of Excellence.

The conference, which attracted 188 scientists from 32 countries, featured 43 lectures over four days and 112 posters presented during two evening poster sessions. During the opening session, Prof. R.F.T. Stepto (UMIST, Manchester, UK), president of the IUPAC Polymer Division, introduced IUPAC aims and gave a very good overview of activities of the Polymer Division. The presentations covered a wide range of topics pertaining to synthetic and natural gels, and to crosslinked polymers addressed from the point of view of synthesis, structure, properties, applications, and modeling. Special attention was focused on the application of hydrogels in medicine. From the early history of poly(N-isopropylacrylamide) (PNiPAAm), to how Karel Dusek and others influenced the scientific community, to more recent work, all the lectures were engaging. The closing lecture, “Fifty Years with Polymer Gels and Networks and Beyond,” presented by Karel Dusek, was joyfully applauded by the audience.

IUPAC Poster Prizes were awarded at both evening poster sessions. The best posters were selected by an international committee chaired by Prof. Henryk

Galina from Rzesow Technical University in Poland. The poster prizes went to T. Gotoh from the Department of Chemical Engineering of Hiroshima University, Japan, and to Irena Kroutilova of the Prague Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry of the Academy of Sciences.

Some of the lectures and posters will appear in a special issue of *Polymer Bulletin*. Dr. Petr Stepanek of the Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry in Prague is organizing the 45th Microsymposium on “Structure and Dynamics of Self-Organized Macromolecular Systems,” which will be held 9–13 July 2006.

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Ionic Polymerization

by S. Sivaram

The biennial **IUPAC Symposium on Ionic Polymerization** was held 23–28 October 2005 in Goa, India—the first time this specialized symposium was held in India. The conference provided an opportunity for the Indian scientific community to interact with leading scientists from around the world working in the area of ionic polymerization. A total of about 150 participants from USA, France, Germany, Poland, United Kingdom, Japan, South Korea, and India attended the symposium, which took place at The Leela, a resort hotel near Colva Beach in Southern Goa.

Dr. S. Sivaram, director of the National Chemical Laboratory in Pune, India, gave a brief welcome

Participants at the 68th Microsymposium on Polymer Gels and Networks 2005.





Dr. Sivarim (left), Prof. J.P. Kennedy, and Prof. Kubisa during the inaugural session of IP 2005, Goa, India.

address on the first day of the symposium. IUPAC representative, Prof. Kubisa gave an introduction to IUPAC and discussed the activities of the polymer division. Prof. J.P. Kennedy gave brief opening remarks, highlighting the evolution of the field of ionic polymerization and its present relevance.

The elegance of ionic polymerizations is the ability to synthesize polymers with well-defined architectures without any side reactions such as termination and transfer. The topic of atom-transfer radical polymerization which has similar attributes of ionic polymerization with respect to control of the polymerization was also included in the symposium.

The technical program, which was organized into morning and afternoon sessions, consisted of 52 oral presentations and 38 posters presentations. Each session was chaired by two eminent scientists, one from India and another from abroad. The order and sequence of presentations were carefully blended so that each session consisted of established and young practitioners in the fields of anionic, cationic, and controlled radical polymerization. Several scientists from India involved in these areas were also invited to speak at various technical sessions.

The symposium also featured well-received evening lectures, which covered topics such as the emergence and growth of the polymer industry in India and the emergence of India as an R&D hub for the global chemical and polymer industry. In order to provide maximum opportunities for interaction among participants, the symposium was held with no parallel sessions and speakers were provided with 25 minutes for their presentations.

The papers presented at the symposium will be published in a future issue of *Macromolecular Symposia*. In the meantime, a conference report has been published in *Macromol. Chem. Phys.* 2006, **207**, 637-639 (2006).

Dr. S. Sivaram <sivaram@ems.ncl.res.in>, director of the National Chemical Laboratory in Pune, India, served as the conference chairman.

European Science Education Research

by Roser Pintó

The 5th International Conference of the European Science Education Research Association (ESERA) was held in Barcelona, Spain, from 28 August to 2 September 2005. More than 500 researchers in science education from around the world, but mainly from Europe, met at this biannual event.

The conference was organized by Prof. Roser Pintó, from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. The executive committee of ESERA, a local organizing committee, a scientific committee, and a honor committee helped in the organization of the event.

The main topic of the conference was "Contributions of Research to Enhancing Students' Interest in Learning Science." In many western countries there has been a decrease in students' interest in learning science and choosing scientific careers, in particular in the physical sciences. The goal of the conference was to enable the science education research community to address this issue through research-based insights. At the conference, more than 400 contributions of research—organized around 20 different foci, such as teacher education, new curriculums, gender issues, environmental education, informal education, ICTs—were presented and discussed.

The conference program included six plenary sessions from internationally well-known keynote speakers; a panel session with editors of high-impact international research journals, nine parallel sessions for the presentation of research results, and a final open debate about "Where the Research in Science Education is Going On."

Other activities included social events, an ESERA general assembly and the formal opening and closing ceremonies, with the assistance of different educational and research policy authorities, representatives from the four catalan organizing universities (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Universitat de Barcelona, Universitat Politècnica de Barcelona and Universitat Pompeu Fabra) and representatives from the European Commission Research Directorate. The conference was sponsored by the Educational and Research administrations of Catalonia, ESERA and IUPAC.

Prof. John Leach, from the University of Leeds (United Kingdom), discussed the potentiality of science education research in his lecture "Contested