



Newsletters

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

This will be my final contribution to this *Newsletter* as President, but you will have to wait until the SCANZ Business Meeting in Broome (and the next *Newsletter*) to get my final Report. For now, and as usual, I will take this opportunity to discuss a few issues of quite general interest to the crystallographic community.

I was intrigued by a recent rather brief article by Andrew Bond and John Davies in *Chemistry in Britain* entitled "Data Overload" (January 2003, p. 44). The authors, who run the X-ray laboratory in the Department of Chemistry at Cambridge, argue strongly that the quantity of small-molecule crystallographic data is growing so rapidly now that it is creating a huge logjam at the publication stage, mainly because authors still need to disseminate their results by traditional time-consuming publication. I encourage you to read the article, and consider their arguments, and their proposed solutions. In particular, they state that in their laboratory approximately 2300 structures have been completed since 1996, but less than 20% have been published. If this scenario is repeated elsewhere, then a vast amount of structural data is being effectively lost. But is this scenario typical of such laboratories worldwide? What is the situation in Australian labs? And as an aside, I note that the number of entries received by the Cambridge Structural Database is increasing annually, and will exceed 300,000 by the end of 2003 (see <http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/about/annrep2002/report.html>).

In the last *Newsletter* (February 2003) I mentioned the SCANZ Business Meeting in Broome, and invited members to place items on the agenda for that meeting. To date I have had no response. So I repeat that invitation, and again suggest that you think about ways in which SCANZ might best utilise its funds. You will see from the latest Treasurer's Report that, for a society with membership of only about 150, SCANZ is remarkably well endowed, and because of this I think all of us need to consider options for the future. There is no doubt that the support SCANZ provides to maximise student attendance at SCANZ, AsCA and IUCr meetings is an excellent investment in the future of crystallography in Australasia. This should become more evident in the next decade, which will see the completion of the Replacement Research Reactor at Lucas Heights, and the Australian Synchrotron in Melbourne. But could the *Society* be doing more? If so, we should probably focus on providing support and doing things that are not presently being done. Here are a few thoughts:

- In collaboration with the National Committee for Crystallography, should we be more proactive in publicising crystallographic work, methods, and exciting results to the general public in Australia or in New Zealand?
- Should we be involved in promoting "science" in general? After all, crystallography does not exist in isolation of the other sciences, especially chemical, physical and biological sciences. An example of this might be the crystal-growing competitions regularly held by schools.
- Should we establish a cash award (or two) for members, to recognise outstanding achievement or contributions in areas of crystallography, to be awarded at the SCANZ meetings? The American Crystallographic Association has several - Buerger, Etter, Fankuchen, Patterson, Trueblood and Warren and Wood, all well endowed (see <http://www.hwi.buffalo.edu/ACA/> for details of these and other ACA awards).
- Should we establish and underwrite a regular Summer School in Crystallography for the Australian and New Zealand research community? Crystallography is taught less and less as part of the formal undergraduate curriculum in our universities but, paradoxically, it increasingly forms a key part of postgraduate studies in a large number of disciplines.

Those are just a few quick ideas to promote some sort of discussion - I'm sure there will be others, and I would welcome any that might come my way before the Broome meeting.

And that brings us to Broome. Planning for these meetings at Cable Beach Resort is now pretty much finalised, and Syd Hall updates matters related to them below. But I must take this opportunity to thank Syd Hall and Mitchell Guss, who have put in a great deal of effort to make these meetings both scientifically excellent and challenging, as well as exceptionally enjoyable social occasions. If you're coming to Broome, for any combination of meetings, you are in for a real treat. See you there!

Mark Spackman

BROOME 2003 Meetings

All is in readiness for the three international crystallography meetings to be held in Broome next month. 300 scientists and 40 accompanying persons have registered for the AsCA'03/Crystal-23, Sagamore XIV and Biological Structure meetings making it our largest crystallography event since the 1987 IUCr Congress in Perth.

Full details of the scientific programmes and paper allocations have been posted on the website www.broome2003.uwa.edu.au.

Oral presenters please note that ALL visual displays will be electronic via a data projector. The lecture halls are not suitable for overhead projectors and there are no slide projector facilities. We ask that speakers bring their visual presentations on a PC-compatible CD. It will also be possible to plug a laptop into the video projection system, but it's not recommended and is at your own risk. Poster boards are 1.2m wide and 1.8m high. The poster presentations will be held in the evenings on the wide veranda surrounding the Sam Male conference venue at the Cable Beach Club.

Please note that social events, coffees, sandwich lunches and poster refreshments are part of the registration package for all registered persons, so please make sure your accompanying partners are registered as well (they also get a conference cap and backpack!). Because most people are arriving in Broome on Sunday August 10th, there will be a welcoming desk at the airport on that day to give you a map and a bus schedule if you are staying in town. For those arriving earlier than Sunday, the Broome Cup is on Saturday and is a big outback occasion. Rumour has it that several synchrotron beamline coordinators are already studying the race guide with a view to funding the initial construction phase.

All in all we are hoping that these meetings will provide you with the best and latest crystallography in a relaxed and exotic setting. Web junkies are forewarned that there will be no e-mail or Internet services at the conference venue – you will need to make other arrangements at your hotel (or do it cold-turkey for a couple of days!). Look forward to seeing you on the 10th.