

Guest Editorial

As I write this editorial we are preparing to meet for the 43rd Annual Denver X-ray Conference. Ever since I became a permanent resident of the United States back in 1971, the "Denver Conference" has been a much anticipated date on my calendar. Before coming to the U.S., I would anxiously await the appearance of the latest volume of *Advances in X-ray Analysis* to read of new developments and directions in the area of X-ray materials analysis. It is interesting to conjecture the success which the Denver Conference has enjoyed. From its modest beginnings in the early 1950s, the *Denver X-ray Conference* has grown to become a major event in the national scientific calendar, with an ever-growing overseas participation. As the size and flavor of the Conference has changed over the years, so too have the methods and techniques of X-ray materials analysis matured. Science is advanced by the creativity of a few and the mistakes of many. It is important, therefore, that from time to time we sit back and reflect on how we got where we are, and where we are likely to go next.

X-ray materials analysis methods are somewhat difficult to categorize in terms of a specific discipline. They are not quite chemistry, yet while they are partly physics their materials analysis aspects preclude them from being included in a pure physics course of study. X-ray materials analysis methods cannot even be categorized as pure crystallography, or even as materials science. X-ray methods are used by geologists but, again, one could hardly categorize X-ray materials analysis methods as the basis for geochemistry. A consequence of this dilemma is that the general field of X-ray materials analysis has become an *orphan field*, spurned by

the pure sciences, to the extent that the X-ray materials analysis community has been forced to fend for itself. Thus, in the past 20 years, we have seen the inception of two new journals—*X-ray Spectrometry* and *Powder Diffraction*, both published by independent organizations.

It is against this backdrop that we must gauge the success of the Denver Conference. The Denver Conference has successfully filled the vacuum caused by lack of interest by the professional societies, not just in terms of providing a forum for the presentation of papers but also as a teaching resource. In recent years, the Conference as a whole has been preceded by 2 days of workshops in both fluorescence and diffraction disciplines. These workshops were initially conceived by Dr. Clayton Ruud and the author back in the mid-1970s, while riding the ski lift at Arapaho Basin. In succeeding years the workshops have become an integral and vital part of the conference, perhaps mute testament to the need to relax and take advantage of the glorious Colorado scenery!

It is also interesting to see what has happened in other countries. The success of *EPDIC* in Europe over recent years also doubtless comes from the need felt by X-ray materials analysts to come together on a regular basis. The Australian X-ray Analytical Association (AXAA) and the British Crystallographic Association (BCA) grew from *Users' Groups*, again, organizations created by users rather than societies.

I guess our watchword should be "X-ray workers of the world unite!"?

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