

# MRS Prospers Under Can-Do Spirit

It seems only a short time ago that I wrote my first President's letter for the January 1995 issue of *MRS Bulletin*. In that letter I outlined some of the goals for the Materials Research Society for 1995. As my term draws to a close, I would like to deliver a progress report on some of the things we have accomplished this year.

The 1995 Spring and Fall Meetings continued in the tradition of excellence established over our more than two decades. The Fall Meeting was enhanced by the introduction of tutorials, each designed to provide an introduction to a symposium topic prior to the beginning of the symposium. The Program Committee continues to work to ensure that these meetings provide a forum for both scientifically vital "core" topics that have a strong history within MRS as well as for new areas of materials research that are experiencing a rapid increase in interest.

In collaboration with other technical organizations, MRS was instrumental in the organization of two conferences outside the Spring and Fall Meetings. The 2nd International Superconductivity Technology Center (ISTEC)-MRS Workshop on Superconductivity was held in June and provided a stimulating venue for about 200 researchers. In October, MRS cosponsored with SAMPE (Society for the Advancement of Material and Process Engineering) a symposium on "Smart Processing of Materials" within the 27th International SAMPE Technical Conference. The meeting was an important link between the research and manufacturing communities. I firmly believe that such technical interactions between professional societies will become increasingly important in the years to come.

The needs of MRS members have evolved dramatically in recent years and will continue to change quickly. In a first step toward understanding these developments, a survey of members was conducted both by mail and at the Spring meeting. The results have told us much about the demographics of our membership as well as about their priorities and interests. MRS now needs to act on these results and continue to take the pulse of its members on a regular basis.

This year MRS has traveled a significant distance along the road to becoming an electronically-based organization. The MRS Homepage (<http://www.mrs.org/>) made its debut in January, and its offerings have been expanding ever since. Electronic abstract submission for the



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*Julia M. Phillips*

Spring and Fall Meetings is now a reality.

With the rapidly evolving national political situation, a 1995 priority has been increasing the communication between policymakers and materials researchers. MRS volunteers have redoubled their efforts to educate members of the government about the contribution of advances in materials to our quality of life, both under the MRS banner and in collaboration with representatives of other technical societies. This was the first year of MRS membership in the Federation of Materials Societies, an umbrella organization with 17 member societies (see *MRS Bulletin*, February 1995, p. 50). Through this organization, we had significant impact in drafting and sending a letter in support of federal funding of university research (see *MRS Bulletin*, July 1995, p. 12). This letter was sent to members of the U.S. House and Senate Budget, Appropriations, Science, Energy, and Armed Services Committees. MRS volunteers have made a number of visits to policymakers in both the executive and legislative branches in order to discuss some of the issues facing materials researchers.

Many technical societies have found that one of the best ways to increase communication between policymakers and

scientists is through a Congressional Fellow, a scientist who spends a year working in the office of a member of Congress. This year, MRS launched a Fellow program with the Optical Society of America (OSA). Kelly Kirkpatrick was chosen as the first MRS/OSA Congressional Fellow and began her service in the office of Senator Joe Lieberman (D-CT) in the week of October 16.

In addition to making policymakers aware of the importance of materials research, MRS members have been given many opportunities to become aware of policy issues that affect them. New offerings in *MRS Bulletin* include in-depth reports on materials-related policy for the "Washington News" department and the "Public Affairs Forum," intended to provide an analysis of public policy issues and how they affect the materials community. 1995 Fall Meeting attendees had several chances to hear the views of individuals who have a voice in federal policy concerning science and engineering. Representative Robert S. Walker (R-PA), Chair of the House Science Committee and proponent of the creation of a Department of Science, gave the plenary address. Dean D. Allan Bromley of Yale University and former Science Advisor to U.S. President Bush chaired a forum on "The Changing Character of Science Policy."

All of the accomplishments of 1995 have depended on the time and talents of many volunteers, in addition to a dedicated staff. The can-do spirit of volunteerism which was the hallmark of MRS in its early years is still an essential component of the Society, setting it apart from many other technical organizations. It has been a privilege to be a part of this exciting year in the life of the Society. So long as the Society maintains a balance between the institutionalization of ongoing activities and the ability to react spontaneously to new opportunities, MRS has a bright future indeed.

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