

Editorial

In the editorial introducing the first issue of this journal a contrast was drawn between the birth of a child and the commencement of a journal. But there are also similarities, since both, in somewhat different styles are 'living things', which therefore develop, grow and change. For example – discerning readers will already have noted a change in typeface. More significantly, a sign of continuing health is that it is now necessary to increase the number of issues from four to six which reflects a determined effort to reduce the time between submitting a paper and its publication. A further consequence of this development is that it would be unrealistic to include a review of patent applications in every issue and these will therefore be appearing in alternate issues, i.e. three times per year.

But what of the future?

Let us mention two of perhaps many very real growth areas.

Firstly, within the synthetic polymer field economic constraints have recently not encouraged the development of extensive research programmes. Indeed, in some cases there appear to be scientists looking for problems. Happily, however, the level of understanding in theoretical polymer physics and chemistry has grown rapidly such that some of the complex issues presented by natural polymers, especially polysaccharides, are tractable by such approaches. Indeed we would encourage scientific colleagues in these fields to consider carefully the possibility of further work in the field of polysaccharides.

Secondly, we do not sense, or foresee a diminution in the utilization of carbohydrate polymers but rather an increasingly sophisticated technology to employ them to maximum efficiency. Scanning over the contents of previous issues, if anything, we would like to see in future issues an enlarged proportion of papers in this category which describe the science of the technology of polysaccharides. The small number of such contributions may reflect an understandable nervousness by industry to publish their results but also – and this poses a challenge – that in many instances the technological situations are more complex than those defined and examined by academic research. Nevertheless, the problems are there with the added attraction of industrial and social relevance.

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