

Preface

This special issue of *Macromolecular Symposia* is devoted to recycling of polymers, a subject of great societal importance. All advanced industrial societies protect their environment and conserve resources by recycling materials that still have a useful life. Among currently used materials, polymers in particular have been a source of concern because they contribute a relatively large volume to the waste streams originating from households. Efforts have therefore been under way to remedy this problem either by reusing the polymers directly or by recovering the chemical or energy content of the polymeric materials that would otherwise be disposed of in wasteful ways, e. g., in landfills.

Most of the papers in this volume were presented at the *Microsymposium on Recycling of Polymers* that took place at the Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry in Prague from 14–17 July 1997 under the sponsorship of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) and the Czech Chemical Society. The Microsymposium was an exceptional opportunity to bring together about a hundred specialists from eighteen countries working on this important subject. It was a follow-up of a previous IUPAC symposium on the same topic that was held in 1991 (see *Macromol. Symp.* Vol. 57). Together with the papers presented at the Prague Microsymposium, we are also publishing here the final report of the Working Party on Recycling of Polymers that operated under the auspices of the Macromolecular Division of IUPAC and several papers contributed by specialists from that working party and their colleagues. By combining the papers from these two sources, we hope to enable the reader to be brought up to date on the current state of knowledge in this essential area.

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