

POLYCHAR – the name is derived from “Polymer Characterization” – World Forum on Advanced Materials has started in the early 90ies of last century as a local event at the University of North Texas (UNT), Denton, founded by Witold Brostow (UNT), Kevin Menard (Perkin-Elmer), and Michael Hess (Gerhard-Mercator-University, Duisburg, Germany, at that time). With the years passing by POLYCHAR grew fast and has rapidly widened its scope to the broader range of materials but still with its centre of gravity on polymeric materials. Attracting participants first mostly from the Americas and Europe POLYCHAR soon became an international conference with a scientific committee reflecting the scientific activity of practically all active parts of the world.

From the very beginning the focus was on the support of young scientists, advanced students working on their thesis, giving them the chance to present their results to an international audience and bringing them together with distinguished scientists from polymer materials science in a family-like atmosphere. The philosophy was acknowledged by the sponsorship of the IUPAC Polymer Division when Bob Gilbert (Australia) was President of the IUPAC Polymer Division, and the support was carried forward by the following Division Presidents Bob Stepto (UK), Jung-Il Jin (Korea), and Chris Ober (USA) who could watch POLYCHAR growing to a world-wide event that has moved away from the familiar UNT in Denton attracting participants now every year to a different part of the world giving polymer scientists in the area the opportunity to present their results and see their part of the world centre of materials science at least for a certain period of time.

The first out-of-Texas event was 2004, when POLYCHAR was hosted by Antonio Cunha, in Guimarães, the early capital of Portugal, now home of the famous University do Minho, next POLYCHAR was in Singapore, 2006 as hosted by Nara

Women University, Nara (another historic capital), Japan, in April, just at the time of the cherry blossoms. 2007 showed the hospitality of the Brazilian polymer scientists in the wonderful bay of Buzios north of Rio de Janeiro. The year 2008 saw the booming India in February as host country of this IUPAC-Conference. The meeting was perfectly organized in Lucknow, the capital of the State Uttar Pradesh and again a place with a long history, by Chairman R. P. Singh (former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lucknow), assisted by Vice-Chairman V. S. Parmar (Delhi University), P. Tandon, Executive Secretary-cum-Treasurer (Lucknow University) and the patronage of D. Pental (Delhi University), A. S. Brar (presently Vice-Chancellor University Lucknow), S. K. Dube (IIT Kharagpur), and S. Prasad (IIT, Kharagpur). The venue of the Conference was kindly granted by the World Unity Convention Centre, Lucknow, through its Chairman J. Gandhi. There were also numerous generous grants from local resources and industry. Without this support it is not possible to reduce fees and support students' participation.

There were 292 participants from 35 countries with 227 presentations. The distinguished Paul J. Flory Research Award was given to Prof. Jiasong He, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing (China), while the International Materials Science Prize, introduced in 2007, was given to Rameshwar Adhikari, Tribhuvan University, Katmandu (Nepal).

Numerous awards and prizes went to students and young scientists who were encouraged in their research by discussions with distinguished polymer scientists from all over the world they had the chance to meet during the conference. Needless to say that POLYCHAR is an excellent platform – not to say a “stock-market” – for advanced students, young scientists and all those looking for employment or a post-graduate position. POLYCHAR is one of the best occasions to join or create a

scientific network, and thanks to IUPAC support many students and young scientists have the opportunity to join the conference. POLYCHAR with its Short Course in Polymer Characterization – a well-established educational project of the IUPAC Polymer Division – a tutorial held by distinguished experts in their field of expertise is still an excellent occasion to meet, discuss, exchange results and develop

new ideas, cooperations in a relaxed, family-like atmosphere.

POLYCHAR 2009 will be organized by Jean-Marc Saiter and his team at the University of Rouen, France, in the historic and beautiful Seine Valley of Normandy in northern France.

World Unity Convention Centre, Lucknow, through its Chairman J. Gandhi

*Michael Hess*