Molecular Crystals and Liquid Crystals

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Foreword

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Foreword

The series of international topical meetings on Optics of Liquid Crystals (OLC) was started about 20 years ago at the time when liquid crystals were being rediscovered as nonlinear optical materials. More precisely, a new nonlinear optics was being created in those years exploring the unique combination of crystalline and liquid properties in liquid crystals. This was the advent of nonlinear optics with hundreds of radians self-phase modulation capability obtained in tens of micrometer thick material layers using laser beams availbale from low power lasers and even laser pointers.

Starting from the first observations of orientational optical nonlinearity in the 1980's, the research into nonlinear optics of liquid crystals turned up new remarkable findings or a surprise each year. There was a need for a meeting that would gather leading researchers in the field under one roof. The scientists at the forefront of this research in Italy were the first to realize the many benefits of such a meeting and found the means for making it happen. Pursuing the best of goals, the advancement of scientific research and collaboration, they were able to set the meetings on Optics of Liquid Crystals on a good path. The 12th meeting held in Puebla, Mexico, on the week of October 1–5, 2007, was as represented, intense, saturated, and pleasant as ever; uniquely and colorfully pleasant due to the extraordinary warmth and friendliness of organizers and everyone around.

Following the traditions of OLC meetings, a symbolic registration fee offered attendees a lot more than anyone would expect: full lodging in the middle of a historic city; full spectrum of Mexican delights; tour to the top of one of the largest pyramids in the world crowned by a church; unforgettable encounters with local rhythms and dances and, of course, tequila. Statistically, the meeting was attended by 120 researchers from 25 countries (among them Iran and India) presenting 21 invited papers, 73 oral papers, and 74 posters. Students made 30% of the attendees. Travel grants and support was provided to 22 researchers and students thanks to the generous support of the meeting by the US Air Force Research Laboratories, National Institute of Astrophysics, Optics and Electronics (INAOE), Optical Society of America, Taylor&Francis, Merck, COMEX and the Maxican Education Ministry.

The choice of location for the OLC meeting, Puebla, recognized the important contributions of Mexican researchers, particularly from INAOE, to the field. They presented 28 papers. It was a rare opportunity to learn about the full spectrum and scale of research in optics of liquid crystals in Mexico, and not only for foreigners, but for the Mexican scientists from different universities as well, many of them meeting each other for the first time.

As liquid crystal displays are nearing maturity from many respects, more and more researchers are shifting their attention to applications of liquid crystals in nonlinear optics and photonics in general. New meetings are being organized each year on these subjects. The huge success of OLC meetings servers undoubtedly as an encouragement, and its scope and format set an example, an example hard to replicate as proved by the OLC 2007.

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