

SPECIALITY POLYMERS '86

It was a special pleasure in my tenth year as US Associate Editor of POLYMER to have the opportunity to organize our conference, Speciality Polymers '86. It was also pleasing to be able to have it on the Homewood Campus of The Johns Hopkins University where Professor Neil E. Gordon of Hopkins had held the first Gordon Conference 55 years earlier.

POLYMER serves a remarkable, many faceted field. The ingenuity of the chemist in producing an ever-widening variety of polymers coupled with the work of physicists, engineers and other specialists has produced, in less than a century, a new materials industry. This industry has grown to a size comparable to that of metals and other materials. It produces both commodity polymers and speciality polymers. Research and development efforts in the latter cover a wide range of topics including, among others, polymers with higher strengths, polymers for use at higher temperatures, as well as polymers with electrical activity and optical activity.

The great interest in the last led to its selection as the topic for our conference. As Dr Donald Ulrich points out very nicely in the first article, the theme can be taken as Multifunctional Polymer Structures with subdivisions of structural scale ordering and electromagnetic processes. These processes hold considerable potential for applications in microscopic systems. Realisation of this potential necessitates the addressing of a broad range of problems which are the subject of growing academic and commercial activity. This activity requires close collaboration between the chemist and the physicist to ensure that polymers are designed in a manner that permits the full exploitation of the structural scale ordering in the electromagnetic processes. These blends of the commercial and academic as well as physical and chemical are therefore reflected in our programme. We were fortunate to be able to have a broad range of excellent speakers starting with the Introductory Comments of Dr Ulrich, who directs a leading programme in this area, and continuing through many excellent scientists from all over the world.

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