

2008

Selected Conferences on Polymer Science: Introduction and Index

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Vogl, Otto, "Selected Conferences on Polymer Science: Introduction and Index" (2008). *Selected Conference Articles*. 270.
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Selected Conference Articles

by

Otto Vogl

In Cooperation with Gerald S. Kirshenbaum, Editor of Polymer News

Introduction

The increasing ease of personal interactions of individual scientists is one of the most important developments in the progress of science in the last century. This was not always the case. In the early 20th century the number of influential scientists was relatively small and while they knew each other personally, they did not meet on a regular basis. The interactions were on local levels. Travel was time consuming and costly and the distribution of scientific publications slow.

At the beginning of the second half of the 20th century, communications became easier and national and international meetings, specialized symposia and seminars offered easier interactions among scientists. Polymer Science, as a smaller and younger discipline with vigorous young scientists, played a pivotal role in these developments.

Some of us, then young scientists, still remember the famous Saturday Seminars at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn (Brooklyn Poly), where announcements of significant inventions were often first presented. There were also the famous Gordon Research Conferences; the first Gordon Conference was the conference dedicated to Polymers, which was held on Gibson Island in 1931. No records were allowed to be kept, no publications were allowed based on the presentation of the conferences. These Gordon Conferences were discussion meetings, as were “seminars” or similar meetings of polymer scientists. The purpose was to present scientific observations and the colleagues were asked for their opinion and to help the scientist to interpret the (often incomplete) results. Social interactions and friendships were formed that promoted effectively scientific endeavor.

As the polymer community gelled, in the 50's, the Macromolecular Section of the IUPAC was formed. The presentations of papers at meetings became more formal and the American Chemical Society (ACS) started to play an important role. An ACS Division of Paint and Varnishes, from which the Division of Polymer Chemistry was spawned in about 1950, existed already in the 40's. Much of the driving force for the dissemination of knowledge of polymer science remained the Gordon Research Conference on Polymers and later on Elastomers. The conferences were usually filled to capacity and it was an honor to be allowed to attend; only one of three applicants was admitted.

In the early 70's the field of polymer science had grown and individual disciplines in the science community reached critical masses. In Polymer Chemistry, we saw the evolution of cationic polymerization; ring opening polymerization and bilateral symposia between polymer scientists of organizations of two countries. The latter type of conferences involved a limited number of scientists from academia and industry. One of the most important and longest lasting meeting sequence of symposia was started in 1974, were between the US and Japan on Polymer Synthesis; it is still being held every 3 years. Other bilateral symposia were organized between

polymer scientists of the U.S and Germany, with Romania and the British community, but they were held less frequently.

Within the context of the principles of the Gordon Research conferences, splinter interest groups created their own conferences on very specific and limited research topics. I believe that at the end of the century as many as 320 Gordon Research conferences were being held on a variety of subjects. I am proud that I was the chairman of the "golden" Gordon Research Conference of Polymers in 1981.

Publication of scientific results has also changed over the years significantly. We had initially the Journal of Polymer Science and the Makromolekulare Chemie. Today we have over 70 Journals that are listed under Polymer Science and Technology, not to speak of the very popular Polymer Preprints of the ACS Division of Polymer Chemistry, now 45 years old, which still has the largest subscription (9,000) of all polymer journals. As with many other Journals, at least in part, Polymer Preprints is now published electronically.

Publication strategies, proper citation and recognition of where original results have occurred have taken new directions. Some fashionable results (such as polywater and "cold fusion", later not substantiated), were first published in the Wall Street Journal.

I have been a participant of numerous national and international conferences since the late 40's and have often been a regular active participant in polymer conferences since 1959, when I attended my first major [polymer conference, the IUPAC Symposium in Wiesbaden, Germany. I was a regular participant at the Polymer Gordon Conference since 1960 and attended the 2nd Moretonhampstead Conference in 1962. I have also been involved in the organization and execution of a number of polymer oriented conferences.

In the late 70's, Polymer News became available for publishing proceedings of some scientific conferences. The Editor, Dr. Gerald S. Kirshenbaum, encouraged me to establish a column in his Journal that described regularly the proceedings of some conferences. I selected those conferences which were smaller and that were not easily accessible to the wider scientific public.

When I started to write these articles for Polymer News I was fortunate to have numerous friends that helped me as co-writers or co-authors to compose these publications.

In this booklet on "Selected Conference Articles on Polymer Science" you will find articles starting with the first U.S.-Sweden Seminar on Photochemistry of Polymers, the second U.S.-Romanian Seminar on Polymers and the important series on U.S.-Japan Seminars on Polymer Synthesis. I covered the sequence on Ring Opening Polymerizations and the series on Cationic Polymerizations.

Most important was the historic and exotic first International meeting in Kunming, China on Functional Polymers in 1981, which I reported with Kiichi Takemoto.

In these Polymer News articles we have covered selected IUPAC Congresses and IUPAC Macromolecular Symposia, (now called World Congresses on Polymer Science), and the first 6

Pacific Polymer Conferences. We also described in our collection seminars that were dedicated to special birthdays of pioneers of Polymer Science such as those of Professors Marvel, Smets, Ranby, Schurz and others.

Last but not least we covered Symposia and Seminars in various places in Central Europe: in Slovakia, whose Polymer Institute is recognized world wide but also in Bulgaria, Turkey and in Austria where the Mark Symposia are held annually.

Finally, selected meetings were highlighted that are commonplace in Japan; the Annual Meetings of the Society of Polymer Science, Japan (SPSJ).

LIST - SELECTED CONFERENCE ARTICLES ON POLYMER SCIENCE *(in 317 pages)*

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