As the Presidents See It...

Foundations for the "Age of Materials"

Jim Roberto, 1991 MRS President

1991 was a watershed year in the emergence of materials science and engineering as a coherent field with visible national priority. Earlier publication of the comprehensive report, *Materials Science and Engineering for the 1990s: Maintaining Competitiveness in the Age of Materials,* precipitated a series of regional meetings involving hundreds of scientists and engineers from industry, universities, and government laboratories. In early 1991, their recommendations were assembled into a consensus document, *A National Agenda in Materials Science and Engineering: Implementing the MS&E Report,* which was presented to the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and the federal agencies. This report called for improved strategic planning in MS&E, better coordination among industries, universities, and government laboratories, and funding increments totalling $1.25 billion per year in six high-priority MS&E areas: information and communications, transportation, energy, health, environment, and maintaining leadership in materials research.

The significance of these events is not diminished by the disappointing progress in implementing the subsequent Presidential Initiative in Advanced Materials and Processing. The point is that the "orphan science" of MS&E was finally on the national agenda. In his introduction to the proposed Advanced Materials and Processing Program (AMPP), Presidential Science Advisor D. Allan Bromley stated that "materials are the basis of a critical enabling technology upon which most other technologies depend for their success." It is this recognition of the central importance of MS&E at the highest level of government which provides the rallying call for the emergence of MS&E as a national priority.

The Materials Research Society and its membership have contributed significantly to these developments. The pioneering format of our technical meetings has done much to encourage coherence and unity in MS&E. MRS people played leadership roles in the MS&E study and in the subsequent regional and national consensus meetings.

In 1991, MRS achieved significant growth in its activities to provide foundations for the Age of Materials. MRS completed an ambitious long-range plan to chart the future of the Society in service to the materials community. In this plan, MRS seeks leadership in interdisciplinary technical programming and innovative meeting formats, affiliations with other materials-related societies, interactions with the worldwide materials community, publications content and technology, materials education, public affairs related to materials research, and empowered volunteerism.

MRS also strengthened its role in public affairs in 1991. MRS organized the first Washington Materials Forum, cosponsored by eight materials-related societies and held in conjunction with the Spring Forum of the Solid State Sciences Committee of the National Research Council. MRS arranged a briefing by Representative George Brown (Chairman of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee) at this meeting. The report on the national agenda in MS&E was published by MRS for the National Research Council. MRS also sponsored a meeting of the Congressional Advanced Materials Caucus.

Perhaps this progress is best summed up in remarks by D. Allan Bromley in his plenary address at the 1991 MRS Fall Meeting. In detailing the important progress being made in materials science, the Presidential Science Advisor stated, "I'm happy to say that one of the very major contributors to that progress has been your own Materials Research Society...by emphasizing interdisciplinary work, goal-oriented research, and materials of technological importance, you have contributed in a very major way to the maturation of this entire field."

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MRS Gains Effectiveness and Flexibility through Empowerment

R.R. Chianelli, 1990 MRS President

Election to the three-year term that comprises the MRS presidential experience came as a great surprise to me. As first vice president you immediately realize that you must quickly decide what your agenda as president will be. It is as first vice president that you can really set in motion the plans that may have an impact on the Society. If you don't do it then, you probably never will because early in your presidential year you become a "lame duck."

1989 was my year as first vice president and early in that year the Exxon Valdez went on the rocks of Bligh Reef in Prince William Sound. That event changed the course of my career as I became the Task Force leader for Exxon's bioremediation science effort. Both this effort and being the MRS first vice president were completely new for me because I had not previously been a member of the MRS Executive Committee. In retrospect, 1989 and 1990 were two years of intense growth and intense work for me. They were also two of the best years of my life.

In 1989 it seemed obvious that because the world was changing so rapidly and so fundamentally, all the institutions that were important to us must change also or face extinction. I felt, therefore, that my main task as president would be to do what I could do to assure that MRS could change to face future uncertainties. I also felt that it was essential in this process of change to assure that what had been enormously successful in the character of MRS be retained.

To me, a key part of the character of MRS was the dedicated volunteers who, from its inception, worked tirelessly as a "labor of love" for the Society. The other key part of the MRS character was the headquarters

https://doi.org/10.1557/S0883769400043748 Published online by Cambridge University Press