

Letter from the President

International Relations

The Materials Research Society is an increasingly international organization. About 35% of our members work outside the United States, and this figure has been growing at a steady pace of about 1% per year, despite that our primary meetings take place in the United States, and that many of our nontechnical programs focus on the U.S. The scientific programs of our Spring and Fall Meetings attract researchers from around the globe and, indeed, we encourage international participation by including many from outside the States in our volunteer base, serving as Meeting Chairs, Symposium Organizers, and *MRS Bulletin* Volume Organizers. Even (or perhaps especially) in times of international tension, scientific research is an activity that largely transcends political borders. The research agenda may vary from nation to nation, reflecting local economic needs, but the discovery of scientific truth and the development of engineering capability depend only upon the quality and integrity of the minds involved, not where they work.

MRS welcomes the differing perspectives and approaches to materials research that come with the worldwide participation in our meetings. They raise the level and improve the quality of all of our work.

While MRS is itself an international organization, it is based primarily in the United States, and it actively supports and encourages the activities of more than a dozen sister societies with a regional or national focus from around the world, many of which also engage a global audience like that of MRS. The European Materials Research Society (E-MRS) was founded in 1983, ten years after MRS, as an independent organization based in Europe and serving a mission similar to that of the U.S.-based MRS. Following E-MRS came a number of others, and in 1991, MRS-type societies based in the United States, Europe, China, Mexico, Taiwan, Japan, India, and Australia cooperated to form the International Union of



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Alex King

Materials Research Societies, or IUMRS, with the primary goal of facilitating international collaboration among the member organizations. New MRS-type societies continue to be formed, with MRS-Brazil as the most recent, whose inaugural meeting will be reported in an upcoming issue of the *Bulletin*. IUMRS bears the same relationship to its member organizations (known as adhering bodies) as the United Nations ideally bears to the governments of its member nations. It is neither a parent body nor the international arm of any individual organization, but it serves as a forum for the sharing of ideas and concerns. MRS is an active member of IUMRS and supports its activities in a wide variety of ways.

IUMRS holds its annual business meeting in conjunction with the International Conference on Advanced Materials

(ICAM), which is held in years that are odd-numbered by the Western calendar, and at the International Conference on Electronic Materials (ICEM) in even-numbered years. These meetings are hosted by one of the adhering bodies, and the schedule can be found at the IUMRS Web site, www.iumrs.org. The 2004 MRS Spring Meeting will be the IUMRS/ICEM meeting for that year, consistent with the traditional focus on electronic materials at our Spring Meeting. IUMRS also coordinates the hosting of an annual International Conference in Asia (ICA) and publishes a newsletter called *Facets*—copies of which have been distributed with the registration materials at MRS meetings.

MRS engages in joint projects with individual societies in addition to the broader collaborations that IUMRS organizes. Examples of these bilateral collaborations include some workshops that are being planned with E-MRS, such as the First Materials Science Forum on Future Sustainable Technologies, held in Augsburg, Germany, this month.

We have also been involved in a series of international workshops and planning meetings sponsored by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) that has resulted in the establishment of procedures for jointly funded international collaborations in materials research. The model for these is the coordinated creation of research grants in both countries, each supporting the research of its own researchers, but in which the overall project is a true collaboration. A number of NSF "Dear Colleague" letters (nsf02141 and nsf02135, for example) describing individual programs can be found on the Division of Materials Research Web site (www.nsf.gov/mps/divisions/dmr/start.htm).

MRS is an international organization in its own right, with a broad range of international ties. We believe that international collaboration strengthens the research enterprise for all of us.

ALEX KING
2002 MRS President

MRS

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