
MRS—Who are we?

**Members encouraged to participate
to help broaden the Society's scope.**

When we look back over the past seven or eight years of MRS activities and recall who have been the volunteers devoting their time and talents to the Society, we see a very distinct pattern. As soon as the Society's events grew to the point where significant resources were required to support them, volunteers from major industrial and government labs entered the picture in a major way. Why and how did this come about?

In the early days, the MRS had virtually no resources of its own. The myriad costs of running a meeting including a growing number of symposia could neither be covered by reasonable registration fees alone nor with the addition of government grants to individual symposia. These sources of revenue did and do fulfill a vital role, but without significant dues income and with no full-time staff or dedicated headquarters, additional support was indispensable.

The Costs of 'Free' Labor

This support came in the form of "free" labor by scientists who ran symposia, ran complete meetings, were members of and chaired committees and served as officers of the Society. (In fact those who assumed the role of meeting chair, the "hot seat" of Society jobs, became so familiar with and so strongly influenced the Society, that they were quickly catapulted into officer positions.) But was their labor really free? To the Society, indeed it was. But to the home institution of these scientists it was certainly not. It was clearly for this reason that the volunteers came primarily from large research and development laboratories which could afford to contribute both the time of their researchers and other resources, such as secretarial support. It was, however, not merely size that determined our volunteers' origins. The research management in these labs had to have had a farsighted recognition of the benefits to be accrued by their staff involvement in Society activities. They determined that a healthy MRS would enhance their own materials research programs through scientific interchanges both at meetings and through individual contacts, and that their laboratories could strongly influence the program topics treated by the MRS. Our volunteers were therefore encouraged to participate as a legitimate part of their professional endeavors.

Because of this backbone of large-lab support, it was also possible to benefit from the involvement of the university community of materials scientists who, with limited research grants, would otherwise have been hard-pressed to participate.

A Broadening Leadership Base

As a leader of the MRS, one sometimes hears concerns about a lack of diversity of institutions from which MRS leaders are drawn. In fact, without examining the underlying reasons for this, the leadership seems "inbred." To some extent, of course, the greater familiarity that current volunteers have with colleagues at their home institution does influence who may be asked to help with future chores. But for the most part, we have found that, notwithstanding a true diversity in the institutions of those asked to volunteer, the positive responses seem primarily to come from those with strong institutional support.

Will this trend continue? Probably not. At present the majority of officers and committee chairs, as in the past, are either now, or were at the time they began their involvement, from a very few well-known laboratories. But the internal resources of the MRS are gradually growing. With an expanding dues-paying membership and with new revenue-generating activities (such as book publication and equipment exhibits), the base will soon exist to buttress the activities of volunteers who bring their expertise but cannot contribute institutional resources nor contribute the inordinate amount of time that is currently required.

The MRS has greatly benefitted from the forward-thinking involvement of the larger research laboratories and their people and we fully hope and expect to continue this healthy collaborative relationship. At the same time, we will undoubtedly see greater numbers of new faces in our ranks playing crucial roles for the Society and representing a wider variety of institutions. In fact, the primary purpose for putting these thoughts in the BULLETIN is to encourage all of our members and meeting participants to consider where it is that they might want to influence the Society's activities and to contact any officer, councilor, committee chair or the headquarters indicating their willingness to become involved.

ELTON KAUFMANN

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To update this information, complete the card in the back of the Directory and return it promptly to:

Materials Research Society
9800 McKnight Road, Suite 327
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<i>The Physics of Fluids</i>	45	395	65	415
<i>Physics Today</i>	20	50	33	63
<i>Review of Scientific Instruments</i>	30	250	45	265
<i>Current Physics Index</i>	65	290	81	306
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For information on membership in MRS, contact John B. Ballance, Executive Director, Materials Research Society, 9800 McKnight Road, Suite 327, Pittsburgh, PA 15237, telephone (412) 367-3003.

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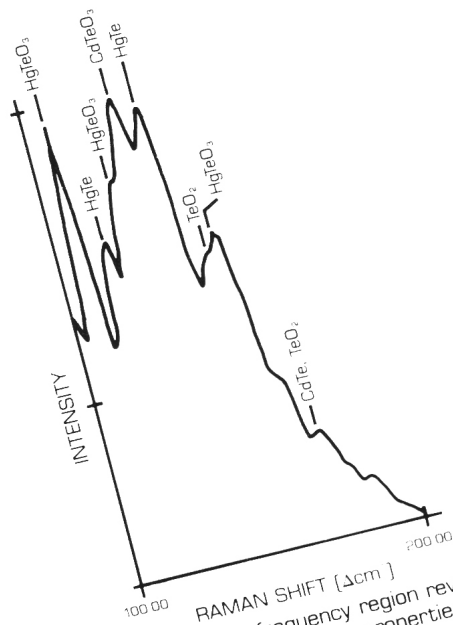


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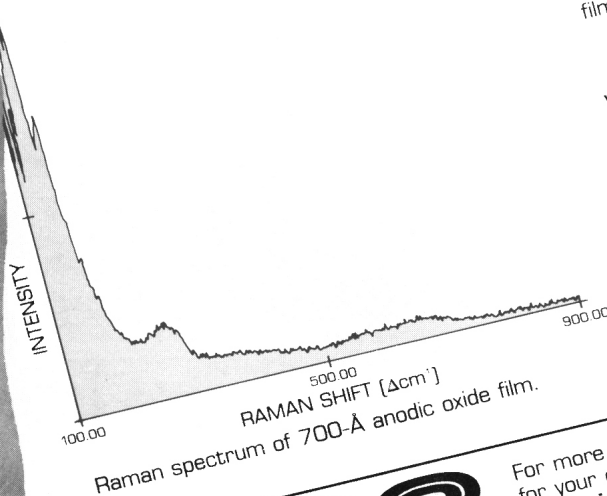
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