

Materials SIG of the American Crystallographic Association (ACA) : Chairman's Report - 2005: Lachlan Cranswick

The Materials SIG has been in a rather moribund state such that the Powder and Neutron SIGs deserve the credit for this year's MATSIG oriented sessions in ACA 2005 at Disney World, Orlando. To try and reverse this sorry state in the ACA Materials SIG (rather than continuing to propose sessions in near isolation) a significant number of materials topics were proposed with other SIGs (Neutron, Powder, Small Molecule, Service Crystallography, Industrial and Small Angle Scattering). Coordination with these SIG chairs was arranged prior to the 2006 planning meeting to afford minimum chance of session conflicts, and thus attempt maximum interest to potential attendees. Within the constraints of a large number of SIGs divvying up 4 parallel sessions, this has resulted in a good set of proposals for 2006 meeting agenda for single crystal oriented materials crystallographers, and a fair agenda for powder materials crystallographers. The constraints of parallel sessions for a diverse area such as crystallography are very apparent. If lacking a consistent and continuous stream of relevant sessions, crystallographers will make the logical and appropriate decision of not bothering to attend. The comment of two "invited" materials speakers at this years' meeting were quite similar: they each attended an ACA meeting around 10 years ago but were alienated by an unbalanced program with perhaps two to three sessions of interest during the entire 5 days. They never intended to come again, and only some strong-arming to attend as invited lecturers changed their minds; for this year. In discussion with some other SIG chairs, this does not sound a problem unique to the Materials SIG. As stated during an ACA Council meeting, a consistent emphasis on a balanced set of sessions, within an affordable ACA conference setting, would be required to reverse this negative image of the yearly ACA meeting within the materials crystallography community.

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