

# The Problem with Reality

By Paul A. Kohl

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**T**he problem with reality is that there is no musical score. When opening a door or sauntering around a corner you can't tell whether fortune or disaster lies ahead because there is no background music to set the scene. Violins don't sound when meeting a stranger who later becomes an intimate friend; an organ doesn't bellow a forewarning melody when disaster lurks. In reality, there are quieter, sometimes hidden signs of big events. For example, while we were busy going about our usual business, the impact factor for scientific journals was published for 1999. We

missed the dramatic drum roll and exclamations of surprise. While the Journal had been the highest impact publication in electrochemistry with an impact factor of 1.994 (1997), and 2.110 (1998), its value shot up to 2.598 in 1999. It also happens to be the largest publisher in the field with 752 articles in 1999 (75% more than the next largest journal in this field). The most surprising statistic was the journal with the second highest impact factor in electrochemistry. Appearing for the first time in the Citation Index, *Electrochemical and Solid-State Letters*, (letters-style companion to the Journal) was the next highest impact journal in electrochemistry with an impact factor of 1.662 (221 articles in 1999). If this were a movie, surely there would have been a piece by John Williams blaring in the background.

If there were a script, someone would probably ask, "Who's responsible for all this?" The answer is easy, "It's the authors." We thank the authors for their contributions and hope to continue to provide an effective venue for their best manuscripts. Every technical paper published by the Journal and Letters is unsolicited, with no filler. These impact factors show that the Journal and Letters are read by a lot of people. In fact, the Journal and Letters have the widest distribution of all publications in this field. All members of the Society receive it as part of their membership package. While many journals have been complaining of declining institutional subscriptions, the music has been a little sweeter for us. We've been able to hold onto our institutional subscribers. This has allowed us to keep our institutional prices at a small fraction of many other journals in this field. Our yearly price is often less than the yearly incremental increases by other journals. Institutions are an extremely important part of our widespread acceptance. If we were musicians, we would have a parade in gratitude. Since this is reality, we say thank you.

The score now reads, "So, what's next?" There will be major improvements (and announcements) in the near future. We will continue to provide the widest distribution and exposure possible for authors. All members will continue to receive all publications as a benefit of membership. Having successfully published Letters electronically (followed by paper later), the Journal will soon move to electronic-first publication with daily posting of papers. We will continue to provide the Journal and Letters at the lowest possible price to institutions. The large number of subscribers and nonprofit structure allow us to place the readers, authors, and members first. Life may not have a musical score, but you can still make records. ■

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## Feeling Old?

This magazine recently received an e-mail that asked the question, "Are you feeling old yet?" The e-mail continued, "The people who are starting college this fall across the nation were born in 1982." It then proceeded to list many other facts to help you determine just how old you felt, such as "Most have never seen a TV set with only 13 channels, nor have they seen a black-and-white TV. They have always had cable."

ECS has an antidote for feeling old. In 2002, The Electrochemical Society will celebrate 100 years of existence, old enough to make the rest of us feel like pre-college students again. Readers of *Interface* can look forward to regular items given over to "ancient history." So look for the distinctive ECS Centennial logo and enjoy the "Centennial Moments" coming your way.



The ECS Centennial Meeting, **May 12-17, 2002**, will be celebrated in the Society's birthplace of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It's always more fun to celebrate when somebody else turns 100, and there are plenty of surprises planned. Don't forget to mark your calendar now and look for more Centennial year announcements.