FROM THE EDITOR

New or Improved?

Given that this issue of the magazine spotlights the New Technology Subcommittee (NTS), it seems appropriate to explore the term "new technology." Consider two R&D developments that have grabbed media headlines in recent months (other than, of course, DNA and the genetic code!): fuel cells and fiberoptics. The lay public may well be justified in branding both of these as "new" technologies. However, Sir William Grove discovered fuel cells back in 1839. The use of fibers and pipes to channel light also dates back to the late 1800s. In both instances, the much needed (and incremental) technological improvements to translate these scientific discoveries to practical use, took an enormous length of time.

So when does a given technology morph from "new" to "old"? Perhaps a suitable yardstick could be the extent of its acceptance and the depth of its penetration into daily human activity or even public consciousness. By this measure, laser technology clearly has arrived (thanks to CD players, barcode scanners, and the like). On the other hand, fiberoptics is only now entering this transitory phase, and fuel cells are not quite there yet.

The NTS will be sponsoring a symposium at the ECS fall meeting in Phoenix, AZ titled: "Electrochemistry and Solid-State Science and Technology in the Service of Medicine." This topic certainly seems to be a timely one for discussion. However, a quick perusal of the Society history volume (*A History of The Electrochemical Society, 1902-1976*, R. M. Burns, Editor, p. 113) would reveal that, as far back as April 1953, a three-day symposium on "Applications of Electrochemistry in Biology and Medicine" was successfully held at the ECS spring meeting in New York City. That such a topic was considered as long as five decades ago, shows remarkable prescience on the part of the organizers and the Society membership.

On the other hand, all this also reaffirms the notion that a seemingly "new" idea often may not be that new after all. Are we reinventing the wheel in these instances then? Perhaps not—we may be significantly improving it. There is nothing wrong with that, considering what has been accomplished with fuel cells and fiberoptics, to name just two examples. Stay tuned.

Krishnan Rajeshwar
Editor

The Electrochemical Society ***Interface*** (USPS 010-327) (ISSN 1064-8208) is published quarterly by The Electrochemical Society, Inc., at 65 South Main Street, Pennington, NJ 08534-2839 USA. Subscription to members as part of membership service; subscription to nonmembers $40.00 plus $5.00 for postage outside U.S. Single copies $5.00 to members; $10.00 to nonmembers. Periodicals postage at Pennington, New Jersey, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Electrochemical Society, Inc., 65 South Main Street, Pennington, NJ 08534-2839.

The Electrochemical Society is an educational, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization with more than 7000 scientists and engineers in over 70 countries worldwide who hold individual membership. Founded in 1902, the Society has a long tradition in advancing the theory and practice of electrochemical and solid-state science by dissemination of information through its publications and international meetings.

The Electrochemical Society
INTERFACE

Published by:
The Electrochemical Society, Inc.
65 South Main Street
Pennington, NJ 08534-2839 USA
Tel 609.737.1902
Fax 609.737.2743
Web: www.electrochem.org

Editor: Krishnan Rajeshwar
e-mail: raj@utarlg.uta.edu

Contributing Editors: Walter van Schalkwijk and Mike Kelly

Managing Editor: Mary E. Yess
e-mail: publications@electrochem.org

Production & Advertising Manager: Ellen S. Popkin
e-mail: interface@electrochem.org

PRODUCTION NOTES
Design Consultant:
O&Y Design,
Trenton, NJ

Printed by:
Cummings Printing Co.
Hooksett, NH