



Paris: A Point of Arrival and Departure

Although I have been back home for a few weeks, the last ECS meeting is still vivid in my mind. How can we forget the excellence of the scientific program, from which arose a multidisciplinary interest in the various symposia rooms that made a continuous flow across the originally intriguing, but soon familiar floors and corridors of the Palais des Congrès? How can we forget the emotion of passing from the thrill of full immersion in advanced, high technology and science to the relaxation of a gourmet dinner in one of the thousands of cafés and restaurants along the boulevards? Or of having the opportunity to see in person a particular masterpiece to which one has been always attracted? One of my students told me that just after entering the Musée d'Orsay and seeing the famous Monet painting, "Les Coquelicots" ("The Poppies"), he could not avoid exclaiming, "That's my mother's!" Rather embarrassed, he explained to the amused crowd that this particular painting represented an important part of his life because a reproduction of it hung in the house where he grew up and it was the first thing he saw to brighten his mornings before going to school!

The Paris meeting was certainly a unique and exceptional event, which drew the interest of a large number of scientists. Despite the worries that in these days limits the enthusiasm for travelling, the meeting had a large attendance with over 2,900 participants, the second highest attendance in the history of the Society's meetings. This was also an important achievement, considering that this exceptional attendance was highly multinational. The world-wide interest and participation in Society activities was evident in Paris. The meeting hosted a number of international symposia, such as the "Eighth International Symposium on Solid Oxide Fuel Cells" run by ECS Divisions in collaboration with the SOFC Society of Japan, and the "Gerischer Symposium on Nanostructured Semiconductor Materials and Interfaces" organized by ECS Divisions following an initiative promoted by the European Section. This Section also established a "Heinz Gerischer Award" and named Professor Akira Fujishima from Tokyo the first recipient of this prestigious recognition. Professor Fujishima received the award at the Plenary Session of the meeting and was later congratulated by a large number of friends during a warm reception.

Although impressive in the Paris case, I do not think that this international success was a mere consequence of the choice of the European site. A wide international attendance is now a fact for any ECS meeting regardless of whether it is held in the U.S., Canada, or Europe, reflecting the continuous diversification of the ECS membership. From 1998 to 2002,

while the U.S. membership remained more or less constant, that of other countries steadily increased. Even more impressive is the trend of the sources of manuscripts published by the ECS journals. Already in 1998 the balance was clear: among the papers published in the *Journal* and in *Letters*, 37.9% were from U.S. authors and 62.1 % from authors in other countries. In 2002 this balance passed to 30.9% and 69.1%, respectively.

ECS has always been proud of its international scope, and has, over the course of its history, devoted many efforts to support it. It is interesting to note that the Society encouraged this aspect since its very beginnings. At its founding back in 1902, the membership numbered 337 with representation from nine countries! In most recent years, effort to promote ECS's international nature was recognized as one of the priorities of the Society. In 1996, an "Ad Hoc Long Range Planning Committee" was appointed by then-president Dennis Hess to examine and plan the international progress of the Society. As a result, new Sections have been established to represent members in Europe, Japan, Korea, Israel, and Brazil. Meetings in Europe are now scheduled on regular basis, following the successful tradition of the Hawaii location, which was planned to enable the participation from Japan and other Pacific Rim countries. A meeting in Cancun, Mexico in 2006 will better enable participation from Mexico and Central and South America.

However, I do not think that the level of internationalization that we have reached these days, and which blossomed in Paris, should be regarded as a point of arrival. Clearly, Paris was also a point of departure, and there is still much to be done. Just to cite a few examples, I believe that a wider international involvement in the Society's committees should be encouraged and that collaboration with other sister societies can and should be strengthened. This seems to be the right road to keep the "Parisien" flavor for the meetings to come! And with this wish, I cordially invite all of you to be in Orlando this coming October.

Arrivederci in Florida! ■

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President