

A Letter from the Editor

Dear Colleagues,

We present here the next issue of the ICA newsletter, carefully avoiding all mention of publication date, volume and issue number, etc. For the finicky however, this is Issue Number 3. The first was in a printed form. The second, and this one are electronic. This, of course, is the first issue for which I am the editor, and therefore the one for which I take full responsibility.

Crystallography, as a discipline, occupies a unique position among the sciences. A Venn diagram showing the overlap of the sciences would depict crystallography as a large circle, having substantial intersection with chemistry, physics, biology, geology, mathematics, computer science, metallurgy, electronics, gemology and many more. Perhaps the only discipline currently outside the grasp of crystallography is cognitive psychology. But who knows, in a few years we may be discussing 'the molecular and structural basis of consciousness'!

Crystallography is also expanding in other ways, widening the definition of what a crystal is. An article by Dr. Gautam Desiraju some time ago in Nature explored this aspect. A loose working definition of a crystal may be that it is something that yields an X-ray diffraction pattern. However, now we shift the focus to defining the word 'pattern', for even water shows the well known 'water ring' at about 3.6 Å. As a simple way out to this hair-splitting, I tell my students that all solids are crystals, and that liquids and gases are not. Of course this definition also does not hold strictly, but I do this to emphasize the fact that the so-called 'crystal glass' (as in Swarovski jewellery) is nothing but glass, quite different from, say, diamonds. And glass, though may appear solid, is in fact defined by physicists as a liquid with a very high viscosity.

Anyway, the point of the above paragraph is the following – a wide variety of technical workers and scientists may legitimately claim to be crystallographers. And the ICA, and therefore this newsletter, seeks to address all of them. I must admit that this issue of the newsletter is rather limited in its contents, but with your support, I am sure future issues will more accurately reflect the all-encompassing nature of our fascinating discipline.

I must thank all contributors for sending in the articles. I must also thank Dr. K. Sekar of the Bioinformatics Centre, IISc., and his band of hard-working computer experts for all the technical help.

And finally, I wish all its members a very Happy New Year.

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