

Poster Sessions get warm welcome in Atlanta



PHOTO: VINCENT MALLETE, GEORGIA TECH

At its March meeting in Atlanta, The American Physical Society held Poster Sessions for the first time. Some seventy authors of contributed papers and four session chairmen participated in two such sessions of the Solid State and High Polymer Physics Divisions, which were run Tuesday and Wednesday.

R. A. Young of Georgia Institute of Technology attended the sessions and was delighted that he "predicted disaster in this thing and I'm always wrong." He felt that placing the Poster Sessions in the traffic-flow patterns of the hotel contributed to their success. People found the sessions accessible as they moved through the hotel and realized they could attend a paper being presented in the traditional format and still not miss interesting Poster Session papers.

Session chairmen Milan D. Fiske (General Electric Research and Development

Center), Ralph O. Simmons (University of Illinois), Freddy A. Khoury (National Bureau of Standards) and Edmund A. DiMarzio (National Bureau of Standards) all preferred floorwalking and eavesdropping to setting timers for the halt of a speaker's remarks. The authors were also enthusiastic—"I hoped to meet six or seven people here at the meeting and they were the ones who came to talk to me about my paper" . . . "I got good useful exchange of scientific information" . . . "It's the only way I'm going to give papers" and "This is much better than a ten-minute paper because you get a chance to think while talking to people" were among their comments.

Those who attended the sessions were pleased they could proceed at their own pace. "I could look at a poster board and, in a very short time, assess many points of the paper and decide whether to stay and

talk with the author." "Excellent! A great improvement giving opportunity for good discussion with the author."

Authors and those who attended the sessions were invited to complete evaluation forms, which will be used to plan future Poster Sessions for the Society. Session chairmen reported that the speakers and audience got right down to the fine points of the papers and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Fiske found that people at one station did not seem bothered by cross conversation from other stations in the vicinity. He is convinced that such sessions are here to stay and recommends expanding the scope to offer as many as half of the contributed-paper sessions in a poster format.

Unlike the Solid State Poster Session in which authors remained at their stations for the full time, one-third of the authors participating in the High Polymer Physics Poster Session were asked by DiMarzio and Khoury to be at their stations each hour. This enabled the authors to circulate among the stations and have an opportunity to talk with other authors. However, most of them stayed much longer than the required hour, and some members of the audience and authors had to be evicted late in the afternoon, when the room was closed for the day. DiMarzio said the enthusiasm of authors and audience was contagious: "It was a little like a high-school fair. The atmosphere fostered vigorous small-group arguments."

Auspicious beginning for APS short courses

A Short Course in Polymer Physics was given the weekend preceeding The American Physical Society's March meeting in Atlanta. A letter from Roger S. Porter on behalf of his colleagues in the Polymer Science and Engineering Department of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst—Frank E. Karasz, William J. MacKnight, Isaac C. Sanchez and Richard S. Stein (all of whom organized, and literally wrote the book for the short course in polymer physics)—summarizes the views of the faculty in the experiment. "Our faculty in Polymer Science and Engineering has been honored to provide the first APS Short Course . . . and the course was a technical,

as well as a financial success."

Academic physicists were in the minority among those who registered for the classes that were held in the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Of the 27 who enrolled, 20 were associated with industry, or a few government laboratories across the country. One student came from France, another from Denmark.

The High Polymer Physics Division was asked in March of 1975 by the Committee on Education if it would undertake an experiment in continuing professional education for physicists—the organization of a short course to be given in conjunction with the March meeting. Adi Eisenberg (McGill University) and Porter agreed to serve as co-chairmen.

At the end of the course, students were asked for their comment on the content

and format. This information will be used by the Division in its plans for another short course to be offered in conjunction with the 1977 general meeting in San Diego. Several other Divisions of the Society have also been asked to consider organizing similar short courses.

The students seem to have generally concurred with the faculty. One commented, "I'm glad I came, it was worth the money." Another stressed the value and importance of the notes that were distributed; he felt they were essential for such concentrated study of a complex subject. One student was disappointed that there was no opportunity to see and examine some of the equipment described during the course. Many students planned to stay for the meeting sessions during the week. □