Knoxville hosts ACA annual meeting

KNOXVILLE CONVENTION CENTER

The Great Smoky Mountains provide a stunning backdrop for the 2008 annual meeting of the American Crystallographic Association, scheduled for 31 May through 5 June. This year the event takes place at the spacious Knoxville Convention Center in Knoxville, Tennessee.

According to cochair Dean Myles of Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), this year's meeting coincides with the launch of the neutron-scattering research programs at the upgraded High Flux Isotope Reactor and at the Spallation Neutron Source, the most powerful accelerator-based neutron source in the world. The SNS facility, built at a cost of $1.4 billion, will have 24 instruments. Meeting attendees will be able to tour the SNS on Sunday, 1 June.

To kick off the week, four daylong workshops are planned for Saturday, 31 May. Also on Saturday, the annual exhibit opens at 7:30pm in conjunction with the opening reception in the convention center, and it continues daily through the evening of Tuesday, 3 June. Poster presentations begin on Sunday, 1 June, and continue through Tuesday. Winners of the 2008 poster prizes will be announced at the annual banquet on Wednesday, 4 June.

On Monday, 2 June, the Transactions Symposium will cover "complementary approaches to everything crystallographic," according to Myles. Titled "Complementary Methods for Structure/Function Studies of Biomolecules," the symposium will focus on various techniques such as small-angle scattering and neutron spectroscopy and on the benefits of interdisciplinary research and the use of multiple techniques. The symposium is jointly sponsored by the following ACA special-interest groups: biological macromolecules, small-angle scattering, synchrotron radiation, neutron scattering, and powder diffraction.

Some 40 scientific sessions are scheduled throughout the week, organized by ACA's 12 special-interest groups. Of particular note will be the all-day session on Tuesday, 3 June, titled "Emerging Opportunities for X-ray and Neutron Scattering: New Sources and New Techniques," which will highlight novel and state-of-the-art capabilities for structural research in chemistry, physics, and biology.

Awards

Awards will be presented at a ceremony scheduled for Wednesday, 4 June. This year's ACA Patterson Award is particularly notable, being bestowed on Bi-Cheng Wang "for significant contribution to the methodology of structure determination from single isomorphous replacement or single-wavelength anomalous scattering data and for its impact on structural biology." Wang joined the University of Georgia in 1995 as a professor in the biochemistry and molecular biology department. The Patterson Award, established in 1980, is given every three years to reward outstanding research in the structure of matter by diffraction methods. The award symposium features such speakers as Wayne Hendrickson of Columbia University and Emil Pai of the University of Toronto.

The Margaret Etter Early Career Award is another highlight. This year it goes to Radu Custelcean of ORNL "for his creative research in crystal engineering of novel and functional metal organic framework structures for selective ion binding." The award recognizes potential in crystallographic research by scientists early in their career. Custelcean received his PhD in chemistry from Michigan State University in 2000.

Social events are planned throughout the week to provide networking opportunities. On Monday, 2 June, the young scientist mixer is scheduled to take place in the Sunsphere, a distinctive structure featuring a hexagonal steel truss topped by a bronze glass-plated sphere built for the 1982 World's Fair. On Tuesday, 3 June, the 14th annual mentor/mentee dinner is planned at Calhoun's on the River, located on Knoxville's historic waterfront. The banquet and awards ceremony will take place in the convention center on Wednesday, 4 June.

Going green

For the second year in a row, ACA is promoting the climate-neutral effort to reduce the net amount of greenhouse gas emissions. The association has selected Carbonfund.org to help make the annual meeting a carbon-free event. Although it is recognized that participants will generate greenhouse gas emissions in attending the meeting, Carbonfund.org will advise on ways to reduce other carbon emissions and offset the emissions that occur.

For more information on the meeting, visit http://neutrons.ornl.gov/conf/aca2008. ■