

Preface

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The 16th international sol–gel conference was successfully held in the city of Hangzhou, China, from August 28th to September 2nd, 2011. It was the first time that such a great event in the sol–gel field took place in China. 515 delegates from 39 countries and districts gathered at the conference. 12 different topics had been selected, ranging from sol–gel chemistry and fundamentals to industrialization of sol–gel science & technology. 3 keynote speeches, 3 award lectures, 16 invited talks, 116 oral lectures, and 302 posters were presented at the conference.

The conference very distinctly revealed a change in the main focus of the research in the sol–gel community as Prof. Michel Aegerter summarized in his Life Achievement Ulrich Award lecture. In the past, the focus was mainly on fundamental research in glass technology. Today, the sol–gel science has turned to more direct needs of our modern society, i.e. materials for energy and biological applications.

The 16th international conference also strived to provide every participant with the opportunity to exchange ideas

and open up new fields of research and collaboration. A very principal observation concerning the need of close collaboration between Academia and industry has been made by another Life Achievement Ulrich Award recipient Prof. Tsutomu Minami (Osaka, Japan).

Finally, a conference is only fully successful when the attendees get to socially connect with each other. At a memorable karaoke night offered by the local organizing committee and the international sol–gel society, the former and current ISGS board members showed that science and fun go very well together.

Since 2005 the Journal of Sol–Gel Science and Technology is the official ISGS journal. The ISGS board, in agreement with the Editor-in-Chief and the Publisher of this journal has decided to publish this special issue based on pre-selected contributions given as oral presentations during the conference. We hope that these papers will give to its readers an overview of the most significant lectures presented on China.

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