

Publishing Research on Materials

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It has been about seven months since the first issue of *Journal of Materials Research* appeared in my mailbox. Since then there has been an increased awareness among materials scientists that a truly different journal has arrived. This is a journal which mirrors the breadth and forefront character of MRS meetings. The multidisciplinary nature of its contents is reflected not only by the large topical coverage, but also by the absence of superficial groupings by any one scheme such as material type, property studied, or processing method. Instead the authors assign topical keywords to their papers, and readers can rapidly browse through them in the table of contents. This journal's success as judged by the high quality papers covering a myriad of materials topics in the first volume is, I think, evident.

However, with any new journal there are always questions from potential authors about the suitability of their work for publication. These questions are relatively easy to answer. Anyone, MRS member or not, who is reporting a contribution to an interdisciplinary materials research problem is encouraged to submit a manuscript for publication in *Journal of Materials Research*. Because of the topical breadth of the distinguished Board of Principal Editors, authors can be assured of an appropriate peer review even if several disciplines are significantly involved. Also, since *JMR* is sent to all MRS members and hundreds of libraries, the readership of the journal is very broad as well.

Another publications issue, however, seems to be confusing researchers who come to our meetings to present their recent work. Since many of our symposia subsequently publish a proceedings to which speakers are expected to contribute, the question of whether their papers may be published in *Journal of Materials Research* in addition to (or, instead of) the proceedings has arisen numerous times. This question was carefully considered by the Publications Committee, the officers, and the MRS Council before *Journal of Materials Research* was established—and the answer is no.

To understand the reasoning behind this, it is helpful to review a little of the Society's history. MRS was founded to introduce a new forum to materials scientists and engineers, a forum in which materials topics experiencing rapid advances would be addressed by researchers attacking related problems from a variety of dis-



ciplines. Although the size of MRS meetings has grown substantially since the founding years, each topical symposium preserves this goal. The symposium organizers work diligently to assemble the best speakers to represent the multitude of interrelated disciplines associated with their topics.

The MRS Symposia Proceedings series exists to faithfully record the research information exchanged at these unique symposia. Because scientists are anxious to report their freshest results, much of the information presented at the symposia is of a preliminary, tentative, or incomplete nature. This, of course, is good since it permits constructive comments from many different quarters to further guide the work toward completion. But it also means that the symposium and its proceedings represent only a snapshot in time of the progress of a given topic. Nevertheless, anchored by more complete, more definitive work reported at the symposium, the proceedings volume as a whole is highly useful to active researchers. To maximize its utility, MRS strives to have the proceedings published within four to six months of the meeting.

The emphasis and content of *Journal of Materials Research* is different from that of the proceedings in several deliberately distinctive ways. *Journal of Materials Research* was established as an archival journal of self-contained reports of completed research with full documentation of the results. Clearly then, incomplete and preliminary results presented at symposia are inappropriate for the journal. However, some symposium papers presented do de-

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scribe completed work. Are these acceptable for *Journal of Materials Research*? The topic of a completed research project is probably well suited for publication as a journal article, but not to the exclusion of one in the proceedings as validated above. In general, papers in the proceedings have a length restriction which makes it difficult to include all the documentation necessary to convince a critical reader of the study conclusions. Thus, a *Journal of Materials Research* article will contain a more complete exposition of the work.

I would like to bring to the attention of MRS symposium attendees one final aspect of publication in *Journal of Materials Research*. Since everyone who attends an MRS symposium receives a complimentary subscription to *Journal of Materials Research*, any completed research reported in the journal on a recent symposium topic will automatically be in the hands of all attendees who are clearly quite interested in the topic. Thus for these journal authors especially there is a tremendous readership potential.

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