

## **MSSA PRESIDENT'S REPORT – November 2003**

The initial part of the year saw the finalisation of the report for IFSM (the E for Electron was dropped at the end of the Durban congress) on the 2002 Durban ICEM-15 Congress. This impressive document gives every insight into the organization of the congress from start to finish including the pitfalls and complete finance details. It is a tribute to Robin Cross (ICEM-15 Organising Committee Chairman), Dudley Randall of Turners Conferences and the many other people who contributed to it that such an open and constructive document was achieved. The report certainly received praise from Professor David Cockayne, the current IFSM President, "Given the outstanding organization shown by you (Robin Cross) and your Committee responsible for ICEM-15, I suppose I should have expected a fine report on the conference. But the report I received today (14 May 2003), copies of which you have sent to other members of the IFSM Executive Committee, is really outstanding.....the commentary and records that it contains will be extremely helpful to IFSM and future Congress organizers." The Congress report mirrored the completely professional organization of the congress. Well done to everyone. It is a Congress of which we can be proud. The next Congress, ICEM-16, will be in Sapporo, Japan from 3-8 September 2006 (<http://www.imc16.jp>), so start saving!

Since the Durban Congress, changes in the tax laws have occurred. These will have a significant impact on the Society and how it conducts itself financially. As a result, the Society has been taking professional advice and assistance. A concerted effort is currently being made to finally move the Society's tax affairs from Johannesburg to Pretoria and to finalise its tax status. Certain matters have been in abeyance for a number of years due to communication problems between the two SARS offices. In addition, due to deadlines occurring at the end of this year, we had to move quickly to be registered as a Public Benefit Organization (else we will be taxed as a normal company) and to set up an educational trust fund with monies from ICEM-15. This is currently being handled in Durban by Tim Wood, who was Treasurer for ICEM-15, with the help of Fiona Graham who was Vice-Chairman of the Organising Committee in consultation with John Soley and Alan Hall in Pretoria. Tim has been going through a similar exercise for Birdlife South Africa.

For the sixth year, the Society participated in the finals of the National EXPO for schools to promote science. Relating to the MSSA involvement, schools were sent brochures inviting students to submit to EXPO 2003 a project using microscopy. Assistance was offered at local Microscopy Units. The best project would win for the student R500, with a further R1000 to be awarded to the winner's school for science development. The winner was: Diandra Adams from the Hoërskool Dirkie Uys, Morreesburg in the Cape. The project involved optical microscopy and was entitled "The prevalence of mites in stored mealie meal."

During the past year, the MSSA listserver has been operating efficiently and has been well managed as usual by Trevor Sewell at University of Cape Town. I extend our thanks to him for his efforts. The listserver is one of the vehicles that we use to get messages and information to members about various issues, conferences, workshops etc. In addition, it is a place for you to ask questions and to make comments concerning various aspects of microscopy. And it is free! It only requires you to send a message.

To log on to the server for the first time, please contact Trevor at:  
[sewell@uctvms.uct.ac.za](mailto:sewell@uctvms.uct.ac.za)

The MSSA website was originally set up and kindly maintained by Keith Williams. It contained much useful information on MSSA and its activities. The site is still found at:

<http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/emu/mssa/>

For the ICEM-15 Congress, a new website was set up specifically for the Congress. It was generously established, maintained and funded by Anaspec.

After the Congress, it was decided to set up a new website for the Society with an easier name. Luc Harmsen at Anaspec kindly registered a new address for us this year:

<http://www.microscopy.org.sa>

On this site, currently maintained by Luc, we have put more information about the Society such as its history, past and present committees, agenda and minutes of Executive Committee meetings. In addition, there are images of ticks, flies, viruses, metallurgical and other samples. At the moment, there is even Father Christmas dancing!

I would be grateful if any inaccuracies could be reported to:

Luc Harmsen ([luc@anaspec.co.za](mailto:luc@anaspec.co.za))

or to the Society Secretary, Alan Hall ([alan.hall@up.ac.za](mailto:alan.hall@up.ac.za))

or to myself ([mikew@gecko.biol.wits.ac.za](mailto:mikew@gecko.biol.wits.ac.za)).

The MSSA Newsletter has appeared a number of times this year under the capable editorship of Tony Bruton. Unlike last year with all the news about ICEM-15, there has been much less to report which must have been frustrating for him. I would encourage members (note to self also!) to assist Tony in his job by sending him ([bruton@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:bruton@ukzn.ac.za)) any interesting news or research items, as well as reports on conferences they have attended that might be of interest to our members. I would also encourage potential advertisers to contact him regards future issues. It really is a very cheap way of advertising since we only charge what it costs for us to produce and to send out to our members.

It is a pleasure to again thank the commercial sector for their continued backing of our endeavours. This year they have supported us through their attendance at the Cape Town conference, its exhibition, organization of various workshops, their speakers in various sessions, and their sponsorship of various items and social events. We are really appreciative of your most valued support. On the prizes front, Carl Zeiss have continued the award for the FEI prize for the best paper involving electron microscopy published in an international journal during the past year. This will be awarded at the conference banquet. In addition, the prizes which were curtailed for the ICEM-15 meeting have returned to be awarded also on the final evening of the conference. Thanks to Anaspec, Setpoint Technologies and Wirsam Scientific & Precision Equipment for their continuous support of these prizes.

The Society was pleased to be able to provide financial support totalling R6000 to 7 students to attend this year's conference in Cape Town. In addition, for the first time, two "prestigious grants" were made available to students who submitted a "first-time-accepted" abstract, that is, no changes required.

One important aspect of the conference is the Proceedings that we produce. Its high standard is maintained through the rather thankless task of our subject Editors. For this year, they were Don Cowan, Edith Elliott, Hester Kruger and Kashif Marcus. A sincere thanks to you all. Yet again, Robin Cross, Editor-in-Chief of the Proceedings, has put everything together most efficiently. Our grateful thanks to him for a job well done.

The Technical Forum has been efficiently co-ordinated by Malcolm Roberts, and we thank him for his valuable efforts.

Within these conference happenings has been the organization of our invited speakers. It is a privilege to welcome them both to the conference and to such a beautiful part of our country. A sincere welcome to:

Professor Hans-Olof Andrén, Chalmers University, Sweden

Professor John Drennan, University of Queensland, Australia

Professor Ed Egelman, University of Virginia, USA

Professor Jean-Paul Morniroli, Université des Sciences et Technologies de Lille, France

Professor Dominique Schryvers, University of Antwerp, Belgium

We thank the Carnegie Corporation, the National Research Foundation plus the Swedish-South Africa (NRF) Research Programme on WC-VC-Co alloys for financial support of their visits.

Your Society operates through the tireless efforts of a dedicated, voluntary team elected by the Society members at the AGM. While performance appraisals are the norm these days, there is none needed for them – it has been a pleasure to work with them. To Japie Engelbrecht, voted Vice President by the Executive Committee, for his help and support; Alan Hall, the Society Secretary, for his quiet efficiency and delicate handling of me; John Soley, the Treasurer, who quietly and securely handles the money; Jan Coetzee who volunteers and efficiently tackles jobs; to Elly Grossman and Luc Harmsen who keep the Committee on its toes with ideas that at times appear to some revolutionary and challenging; to Luc our roving ambassador always thinking of us and of new angles, plus supplying real support to the Society; to Candy Lang, Conference Organizer, who has made this conference come alive and kicking with success, while providing constructive ideas on Society matters. I would like to thank Candy and her hardworking team for their toil and sacrifices in making this conference grow from an invitation through to successful fruition. Finally, I must mention thanks to a non-Committee person, Jannie Neethling for taking over one of Japie's jobs, of fund raising for some of the invited speakers, while Japie was overseas supposedly undertaking serious research!

The Executive Committee has been committed to the Society increasing its educational involvement in the community with respect to microscopy, especially in schools in the disadvantaged community. In addition, it has become increasingly aware that ways must be found for promoting microscopy to the general public and emphasizing its importance to both science and the country. This is currently being investigated. We will, in the future, be looking for possible avenues of obtaining overseas funding. In addition, we need to look for ways to increase our membership. I ask all our members to promote the Society especially to students and young members of staff. I have been concerned over the past two years or so about the increasing trend by institutions to limit the number of people they will send to a conference. While I have some sympathy for this development presumably resulting from current financial restraints, I firmly believe that students, in particular, need attendances at conferences to not only enhance their knowledge, interact with new people and fresh ideas, but also to gain presentation skills so essential in the commercial, government and tertiary sectors. I truly believe that our conferences offer excellent value for money - happily, both scientifically as well as socially!

On behalf of your Executive Committee, I thank you for your support during the past year. We wish you well over the holidays and everything of the best in the coming year.

Mike Witcomb

27 November 2003