

## From the Editors

### *Meteoritics*

The journal of the Meteoritical Society has been known as *Meteoritics* since 1953, when its publication was a joint venture with the Institute of Meteoritics in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Prior to that, the Society published its papers in a section of *Popular Astronomy*, and each year collected them together in tomes called "Contributions of the Society for Research on Meteorites" (1933–1946) and subsequently "Contributions of the Meteoritical Society" (1947–1951). Sadly, the years 1953–1967 were not altogether successful for the journal and, after several years of intermittent publication and near-extinction, it moved to The Center for Meteorite Studies at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona, in 1968 where it finally became a stable quarterly journal. With the 1996 January issue, *Meteoritics* will become *Meteoritics and Planetary Science* with six issues per year.

The name of a journal, like all institutions, is at the same time both trivial and highly important. It is trivial because it is arbitrary. Once a journal acquires a certain reputation, its reputation outspeaks its name. It is highly important for several reasons. In the current instance there is the unfortunate fact that the present name is a marketing disaster. The name, which does not appear in the dictionary, can easily be mistaken for quite a different product and the mistaken-identity stories are legion. Meteorology, while a fine Science, is not ours.

However more importantly, our Science has grown up. The founders of *Meteoritics* defined the subject as the study of meteors and meteorites and thought of it as the only branch of astronomy not wholly dependent on radiant energy (Leonard, 1953). For many years, our meetings and our journal were rather small and friendly affairs of kindred but very esoteric spirits. Times are very different now. We have lived through the space program, which has sent satellites to other worlds and men to the Moon. We know in an unambiguous way, and we have the means to exploit it, that meteorites and meteors are not ends in themselves that can be dealt with in isolation from research on the rest of the cosmos. No one talking about meteorite parent bodies can ignore asteroid studies, no one exploring isotopic anomalies in meteorites can fail to read the nucleosynthesis or interstellar chemistry literature, no one studying cosmic dust can fail to consider cometary data, and no one modelling cratering mechanisms can fail to take into account craters on other worlds. Even the meteorites have crossed fields. Some of them own-up to Mars or the Moon as their parent bodies. And it is a two-way street. Students of all small bodies in the solar system, interstellar chemistry and nucleosynthesis, the early solar nebula and the cratered surfaces of planets and the Moon, cannot ignore meteorite data. The study of meteorites is now inseparable from many of the major questions in astrophysics, geoscience and planetary science.

The change in the name of *Meteoritics* acknowledges the fact that our field is much much broader than was realized in 1953. Those of us who regret the passing of the old name probably also regret the loss of the intimacy of our small research field and that instead of the 30–40 at our annual meetings in the 1950s, our meetings now have 300–400 participants. We should keep focused on the uniquely exciting potential of the field as it now exists.

It reassures me that soon after the new name was announced the only criticism it received was that it was too narrow. After all, much of the new frontier is stellar or interstellar. The critic was quite right, our Science is again ahead of the journal name, but

exhausted by my present efforts I'll here leave a note for the Editor in the year 2047 to think about it!

Derek Sears  
Editor

### REFERENCES

- LEONARD F. C. (1953) Introducing Meteoritics: The journal of the Meteoritical Society and the Institute of Meteoritics of the University of New Mexico. *Meteoritics* 1, 1–2.