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A fourth continent

No two periods in the history of meteorite research have been alike. The application of analytical chemistry to meteorite research was the hallmark of the first half of the nineteenth century, as was the petrographic microscope to the second half. This century saw the influx of a variety of instrumental techniques, most especially the electron-microprobe and the mass spectrometer. Aside from the rocks of Apollo, the space program impacted little, but that is all about to change. The hallmark of the twenty-first century will be sample return and the ultimate merging of meteoritics and planetary science. In just the first few decades we are scheduled to see samples from comets, asteroids, Mars and even the interplanetary medium. Who knows what later decades will offer, undoubtedly multiple sample return from all these objects, and almost certainly a permanent lunar colony.

The Meteoritical Society too has changed its face with the passing of time and generations of scientists. Ursula Marvin charted this evolution in her 1993 article. Between 1933 and 1970 all the meetings of the society were in North America. Then in 1972 the Society entered a period of alternating meetings between Europe and North America until 1990 when it met in Perth, Western Australia. Now we see another major step as the Society meets in a fourth continent.

The first African meeting of the Meteoritical Society attracted 236 papers of which the Program Committee accepted 228, which is comparable with most U.S. meetings and somewhat lower than European meetings. As befits a meeting near some of the most important impact structures on Earth, impact papers loom large at the meeting, there are four sessions, including a special session sponsored by the International Mineralogical Association. Martian meteorites are still popular and have two sessions, while the Moon and differentiated meteorites share a session. Cosmogenic and trapped gases, isotopic anomalies and IDP have one session, while chondrites have just two sessions, few for a meeting specializing in meteorites. Unique to the Johanessburg meeting are sessions on nanoscale analysis and thermal history. The meeting is also to be noted for the large number of papers that will not be presented orally, there are 71 poster and 21 print-only presentations. The abstracts of all 228 papers appear in this volume.

It is always a great pleasure for me to thank the many people who bring this volume into being. The local organizers are always very cooperative in responding to the endless demands of the editorial office, and this year was no exception. And the publication staff at the Lunar and Planetary Institute were as cheerful and hardworking as ever. Our colleagues in the production and editorial offices also worked diligently to ensure we met the schedules without loss of quality. This was especially difficult this year when we had an alarming number of over-length abstracts that had to be fixed "on the fly" during the heady days of production. To all my colleagues, who are responsible for turning 228 abstracts, six articles, two award citations and an acceptance speech, the editorials, the frontispiece material and the indices, into a publishable supplement to the journal in less than two months, I extend them all my heartfelt thanks.

Derek Sears
Editor

REFERENCE

MARVIN U. B. (1993) The Meteoritical Society: 1933 to 1993. *Meteoritics* **28,** 261-314.