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Report On The 26th International Liquid Crystal Conference

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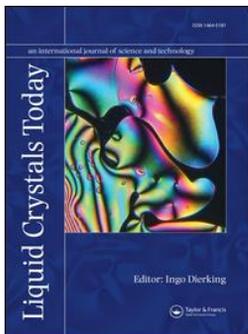
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Report on the 26th international liquid crystal conference

The 26th International Liquid Crystal Conference (ILCC) was held on the campus of Kent State University, Kent, OH, USA, from 31 July to 5 August 2016 (Figure 1). William Doane served as the Honorary Chair and Hiroshi Yokoyama, Director of the Liquid Crystal Institute, chaired the conference (Figure 3). The Organising Committee consisted mainly of scientists associated with Kent State University, while the 38 members of the Scientific Committee (chaired by Peter Palffy-Muhoray) came from countries all over the world.

The 670 conference participants came from 37 countries. About 300 of them were members of the International Liquid Crystal Society (ILCS), and around 200 of them were students. Plenary talks were given by John Ball (University of Oxford) (Figure 4), Achintya Bhowmik (Intel Corporation), Shin-ichi Ishiwata (Waseda University), Tom Lubensky (University of Pennsylvania) and Jose Luis Serrano (University of Zaragoza). In addition, there were 80 invited presentations (25 min), 145 contributed presentations (20 min) and 421 poster presentations.

The conference officially opened on Monday, but a series of six tutorials and a public lecture were organised during the day on Sunday, followed by a Welcome Reception Sunday evening (Figure 2). The tutorials were given by Dirk Broer (Technical University Eindhoven), Noel Clark (University of Colorado), Cristina Marchetti (Syracuse University),



Figure 1. Kent State University in Ohio, USA, was the venue for the 26th ILCC, already the sixth time that the university hosts this event.



Figure 2. The author of this report in discussion with Bill Doane, the Honorary Chairman of the conference, at the Sunday evening reception.



Figure 3. As Chairman of the conference, Hiroshi Yokoyama opens the meeting with a short speech.

Martin Schadt (MS High-Tech Consulting), Hideo Takezoe (Toyota Physical and Chemical Research Institute) and Slobodan Zumer (University of Ljubiana). The public lecture entitled 'The Art of Scientific Presentation' was delivered by Jan Lagerwall (University of Luxembourg).

For the 5 days of the conference, the mornings were taken up by four sessions and the ILCS General Meeting/Awards Session. There were three afternoon sessions and one afternoon for excursions. During the session times, either five or six parallel sessions took place for a total of 37 sessions. Posters were presented before the three afternoon sessions. The general breakdown of the subject matter of the presentations was



Figure 4. It is not often that a mathematician, here John Ball from Oxford University, gives a plenary lecture at the ILCC.

Physics and Mathematical Studies: 300; Chemistry, Biology, and Materials: 239; Applied Research: 109; and History and Industrial Perspective: 9.

As is the custom, the ILCS conferred its annual awards and prizes at the ILCC, and this time it was especially exciting. The Glenn H. Brown Prizes went to Daniel Bellor (Harvard University), Johanna Bruckner (University of Stuttgart), Angel Martinez (University of Pennsylvania) and Israel Lazo-Martinez (Samsung Display). All four of these prize winners conducted superlative research and the talks during the awards session were outstanding. The winner of the ILCS Early-Career Award (The Michi Nakata Prize) was Taizo Mori (National Institute for Materials Science, Japan), and the ILCS Mid-Career Awards were presented to Ingo Dierking (University of Manchester) and Georg Mehl (University of Hull). The highlight of the awards session was bestowing the ILCS de Gennes Prize for the first time. This award comes with a medal designed by the daughter of Pierre-Gilles de Gennes and was presented to Noel Clark (University of Colorado) (Figure 5).

As is always the case with conferences organised by liquid crystal researchers at Kent State University, the planning for the conference was extensive and just about every aspect of the conference ran smoothly. The airport shuttle service, the inexpensive but comfortable dormitory rooms, the outfitting of the rooms used for oral and poster sessions, the



Figure 5. Noel Clark (right) is the first recipient of the de Gennes Prize.

arrangements for conferees to eat breakfast and lunch and the financial help given to scientists who needed it were all arranged extremely well. On the other hand, some comments heard at the conference concerned the scheduling of five or six parallel sessions. Although this gave many conferees the opportunity to present their work orally, it was necessary to make many difficult choices of which talks to hear. Finally, there were also people who felt that women were not sufficiently represented among the invited presenters. None of the five plenary speakers were women, one of the six tutorial presenters was a woman, and between 20% and 25% of the invited speakers were women.

The ILCC is held every two years, so the conference ended with a short presentation about the next ILCC. The 27th International Liquid Crystal Conference will be held on 22–27 July 2018 in Kyoto, Japan. Takashi Kato (University of Tokyo) is the conference chair.

Let me end with some personal observations. I had the honour of presenting my research in the last slot of the last session, a situation that sooner or later happens to all of us! Needless to say, I was very much relieved to see plenty of people in the audience, and I have to assume the same was true for the speakers in parallel sessions. I think it speaks to the success of the conference that so many people attended sessions up to the very end.

The area of research that I found most exciting at the conference was the ever-increasing foray of liquid crystals into the biological realm. Living liquid crystals as an example of out-of-equilibrium systems, active systems in which energy is constantly being converted into self-sustained motion and self-organised



Figure 6. The Rock&Roll Hall of Fame certainly was an unconventional venue for the conference dinner to take place, but one where all participants enjoyed looking through the photographs, clothes and instruments of their musical heroes.

liquid crystal networks driven by molecular motors seem to create a whole new dimension for the field of liquid crystals.

Finally, let me say that I thoroughly enjoyed the Conference Banquet at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame (Figure 6). Maybe it was the excellent food (it definitely was not the long lines!), perhaps it was a taste of whisky that had been aged 24 h using a new chemical process instead of a similar number of years in barrels, or just maybe it was this child of the 60s walking through exhibit after exhibit showing singers, musicians and rock groups that brought back so many memories of my youth.

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