

## Preface

Florence Babonneau · Michel A. Aegerter

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The 15th International Sol–Gel Conference—Sol Gel 2009—was held in Porto de Galinhas, Pernambuco State, Brazil from 23–27 August 2009. Previously known as the “International Workshop on Sol–Gel Science & Technology”, the international sol–gel conferences have previously taken place in Padova (Italy, 1981), Würzburg (Germany, 1983), Montpellier (France, 1985), Kyoto (Japan, 1987), Rio de Janeiro (Brazil, 1989), Sevilla (Spain, 1991), Paris (France, 1993), Faro (Portugal, 1995), Sheffield (UK, 1997), Yokohama (Japan, 1999), Padova (Italy 2001), Sydney (Australia, 2003), Los Angeles (USA, 2005) and Montpellier (France, 2007).

This highly successful series of conference confirms sol–gel science and technology as a very active multidisciplinary area of research. Special thanks are due to the Organizing Committee, Prof. Sidney J. L. Ribeiro (Institute of Chemistry, UNESP, Araraquara—SP, Brazil) and Prof. Luis D. Carlos (Department of Physics, University of Aveiro, Portugal) for their tireless efforts in producing this world-class event. About 370 contributions as keynote and invited lectures, oral contributions or posters, were presented during the week.

The International Sol–Gel Society, ISGS (<http://www.isgs.org/>), also took an active role in the conference organization. The Life Achievement Award was given in 2009 to Prof John D. Mackenzie (UCLA, USA) for his pioneering and outstanding contribution to the field of sol–gel

science. In the true generous spirit, which characterises Prof J.D. Mackenzie, he decided to give his prize money back to the International Sol–Gel Society to promote the attendance of graduate students to the 15th International Sol–Gel Conference in Brazil. Three candidates were selected—Margarita Hernandez (University of Altamira-Mexico), Cécile Philippot (Institut Néel CNRS/UJF Grenoble-France) and Yasuaki Tokudome (Kyoto University-Japan)—who gave a short 5 min presentation as part of the Life Achievement presentation. It is interesting to see that they truly represent the diversity of our community. They come from three different regions of the globe (Asia, Europe and Central America), two of the candidates are female and their research covers three different topics of the sol–gel field: Porous Materials (Yasuaki Tokudome), Piezoelectric thin films (Margarita Hernandez) and Nanoparticles for biological applications (Cécile Philippot).

The ISGS was also responsible for the selection of the prestigious Ulrich Awards, bestowed in memoriam of Prof. Dr. Donald Ulrich, to outstanding young scientists. An independent international committee has selected Dr. Paolo Falcaro (CISRO, Clayton, Australia) and Dr. Robert Kreiter (ECN, Petten, The Netherlands) who have been recognized for their distinguished achievements in Sol–Gel Basic and Applied Science. Both of them gave an invited lecture.

Since 2005 the Journal of Sol–Gel Science and Technology is the official ISGS journal. In view of the very large number of contributions presented at this international conference, the ISGS board, in agreement with the Editor-in-Chief and the Publisher of this journal decided to publish this special issue based on contributions given by awardees of the ISGS prizes and invited speakers. In this way, we hope that these papers will give to its readers an overview of the most important contributions presented during the Sol Gel 2009 conference.

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F. Babonneau  
ISGS Board, Université Pierre et Marie Curie, Paris, France  
e-mail: florence.babonneau@upmc.fr

M. A. Aegerter (✉)  
Bottens, Switzerland  
e-mail: michel.aegerter@bluewin.ch