

RETIRING PRESIDENT'S REVIEW**Review of IUVSTA Activities during the 1995-1998 Triennium****John L. Robins**

To begin, I have the sad duty to report on the passing of one of our Councillors. It was with great sadness that we received the news that our esteemed colleague Professor Vytas Grazhulis, Chairman for the Russian National Committee and IUVSTA Councillor for the Russian Federation, had died suddenly on 27th May 1998. Professor Grazhulis had been instrumental in securing the entry of the Russian Vacuum Society into IUVSTA in 1992 and had served as Councillor since that time. He was acknowledged by us all as an accomplished scientist, a true friend and an excellent ambassador for his country. We will miss him.

On a happier note, it is a great pleasure for me now to review the activities of IUVSTA for the past triennium, 1995 to 1998. The Union has achieved much and this is due to the combined efforts of very many people working on various aspects of numerous activities, some very visible and some much less visible but just as important. I am extremely grateful to each and every one concerned. It is these individual actions that have strengthened our Union and produced the achievements which I am reviewing here.

At this General Meeting, GM13, we have introduced a new procedure of preparing written reports. Thus my own "Overview of the Activities of IUVSTA as presented in the Triennial Committee Reports for GM13", together with the reports of the Secretary General, Treasurer, STD, Divisions and Committees, combine to present an extremely detailed record of the activities of IUVSTA over the past three years. Thus I will restrict myself here to a review of important issues rather than repeating the details.

In my Inaugural Statement on taking office at the start of this triennium, I predicted that developments in electronic communication would have a strong influence on all our lives and particularly on the Union. This has certainly been true. From my own experience as President, e-mail has been invaluable in allowing me to maintain very close and continuous contact with my fellow Officers, Councillors and others across the 30 nations involved with our Union.

The creation of our IUVSTA Web site (<http://www.vacuum.org/iuvsta>) has been a major development for the Union. This site is now the central source of information about our Union's history, structure, management and activities. It is both a reference source and a vehicle for communicating information to our members.

In this connection I must make special mention of our IUVSTA News Bulletin. After 140 issues in printed form, we have now converted to publishing in electronic format. It is accessible through our Web site and will appear twice per year following ECMs. A feature has been to include a detailed summary of the Union's activities during the six month period between ECMs. However, this new electronic format will require a re-evaluation of the basic philosophy behind choosing the content and presentation of the Bulletin and your opinions and suggestions, as readers, are sought.

A new initiative this triennium was the creation of the IUVSTA Prize. The purpose of this prestigious award is to recognise and encourage outstanding internationally-acclaimed research in the fields of interest to IUVSTA. It is pleasing to note that already eleven international companies have associated themselves with IUVSTA as donors for this Prize.

Our congratulations are extended to Professor J F van der Veen who has been chosen as the recipient of the inaugural award of this Prize.

Our finances have been well managed once again during this triennium but our Finance Committee has been faced by a new challenge. Most of our scientific and educational activities are financed by income derived from our reserve funds. In the past this income was in the form of interest gained from bank accounts and term deposits. However, with falling interest rates, our committee has felt obliged to investigate the possibility of other forms of investment. They are very conscious of their responsibility to safeguard our reserves whilst ensuring we can maintain our scientific program, and we wish them well.

In my Inaugural Statement I expressed also the hope that we might extend our activities to include more of the technologically developing countries in Asia. For various reasons this has not been achieved although some recent initiatives are still being explored. However, there is continuing activity in the five IUVSTA member countries in that region, with a special regional conference planned for next year, and a new Vacuum Society in Pakistan may soon be applying for membership. I would also like to say how pleased I was that the Executive Council chose to hold one of its recent meetings, ECM-79, in Australia.

It had also been my wish that the Union would develop and adopt a Mission Statement and Strategic Plan during the triennium. Drafts of these documents are currently being refined. It is my belief that in developing these dossiers, members of the Union will be encouraged to consider broadly what the objectives of IUVSTA should be both now and in the future, and then contribute to planning a full range of activities to achieve these goals.

Whilst most aspects of our education program have continued to flourish, we have had to acknowledge an inherent difficulty in trying to run teaching activities such as Summer Schools. In such Schools, especially those designed for participants from developing countries, there is little or no income from registration fees and, as our own funds are limited, we are dependent on soliciting support and collaboration from other organisations. However, such financial support is difficult to find in the present economic climate. Fortunately the problem faced in that area was more than compensated by successful developments in other areas of our education program, such as our Visual Aids, Short Courses and the IUVSTA/ICTP Workshops.

The principal purpose of our Union is always recognised as the contribution we make to promoting science and its applications on an international scale, to supporting the scientific activities of our member societies, and to bringing benefit to individual scientists throughout the world. Under the direction of our STD, our Union has continued a strong and vigorous program to achieve these goals. The organisation of high level scientific workshops has been continued and expanded, high quality conferences have continued to be organised with valuable input from our Divisions into the planning of the scientific programs, and requests for our sponsorship of conferences run by other organisations has shown a recognition of our status whilst also ensuring that those meetings adhere to the standards we have set.

It would be remiss of me not to remark on the very impressive overall activity of the Union. Reference to the detailed reports mentioned earlier will confirm that: our scientific activities have expanded; our educational activities continue to grow; we have been able to offer some help to developing countries; we have maintained a liaison with the large international scientific organisations; we have awarded our Prize and Welch Scholarships; we have used our financial resources wisely; we have been guided by our statutes in managing our affairs; we have ensured the careful planning of our Congress and conferences; and we have taken

cognisance of our future through long range planning. All these activities have added strength to our Union and enabled us to bring benefits to the scientific community. I again thank all those who have contributed to achieve this, particularly our Councillors and the Chairs and Secretaries of our Divisions and Committees.

Whilst it is impossible to name all those who have helped me and the Union, I would like to express my personal thanks to the Officers who have served with me. In doing so I am sure that I express also the thanks of the members of IUVSTA. The advice and wisdom of our Past President, Professor Ted Madey, has been of great value to me and I thank him also for initiating our new IUVSTA Prize. It has been a pleasure to work with our President-Elect, Professor Phil Woodruff, and I am confident that the activities of the Union will grow from strength to strength under his direction in the next triennium. I am grateful to our Treasurer, Professor Rudi Dobrozemsky, who has shown care and personal concern in his management of our finances during a triennium in which considerable changes have occurred in the international financial scene. The scientific activities of the Union have been continually expanding and it has been of considerable help to me to be able to leave the detail of this work in the capable hands of our Scientific Director, Professor Ugo Valbusa, and our Scientific Secretary, Dr. M-G Barthés. I would also like to thank Professor Harry Leck for preparing the minutes of our ECMs with such attention to detail over the past three triennia. These minutes, complete with their appendices, are the permanent record of our activities that we preserve for the future.

I have left my thanks to our Secretary General, Professor John Colligon, until last as I wish to emphasise the debt of gratitude we owe to him. The role of Secretary General, especially as he has fulfilled it, has an enormous impact on the image and well being of the Union. He has shown exceptional dedication, wisdom and efficiency in carrying out this role over the past nine years, despite the huge workload involved. During this time he has had the ability to manage the affairs of the Union and persuade others to fulfil their commitments whilst earning the respect and friendship of all. His knowledge and advice have been of inestimable value to me and it gives me great pleasure to express my thanks to him.

I have considered it an honour to be able to serve as the President of IUVSTA and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to do so. IUVSTA has the potential to make a very positive impact on science and society. It is already doing this and, with the assured support of its members, I am confident that it will continue to do so to an increasing degree.

John L. Robins

President of IUVSTA

August 1998.