
In the next issue ...

Guest Editor M. Brian Maple, professor of physics at the University of California, San Diego, re-visits the topic of high-temperature superconductivity with a series of six articles that focus on the physical properties of high T_c oxide superconductors:

“Photoemission Spectroscopy Studies of the Electronic Structure of High T_c Copper Oxide Superconductors” by J.W. Allen, University of Michigan, and C.G. Olson, Ames Laboratory.

“Infrared Studies of the Superconducting Energy Gap and Normal State Dynamics of $Y_1Ba_2Cu_3O_7$ and $Ba_{0.6}K_{0.4}BiO_3$ ” by Z. Schlesinger and R.T. Collins, IBM T.J. Watson Research Center.

“Electron Tunneling in High T_c Superconductors” by J.M. Valles Jr., University of Oregon, and R.C. Dynes, AT&T Bell Laboratories.

“The Magnetic Phase Diagram of High T_c Superconductors” by A.P. Malozemoff, IBM Yorktown Heights.

“The Nature of Superconductivity in $Ba_xK_xBiO_3$ ” by D.G. Hinks, Argonne National Laboratory.

“Electron-Doped High T_c Superconductors” by M.B. Maple, University of California, San Diego.

See the January 1989 *MRS BULLETIN* for the previous series of articles on this topic. This series of articles emphasized the families of high T_c superconducting oxides known at that time, and also considered processing techniques and thin films.

POSTERMINARIES

Volunteeritis

The mainstay of MRS, as for any good cause, is the tireless volunteer. We can't direct accolades often enough toward these stalwarts of our organization. In this area we can never have too much of a good thing. Well, ...almost never. To further compound cliches, Posterminaries may be treading on thin ice by risking the perception that we are looking gift-horses in their mouths by noting one tiny problem. We define with some trepidation an affliction dubbed “volunteeritis.” The volunteer and the organization can both be affected by this chronic, self-perpetuating ailment.

Two root-causes work in concert. One is the scarcity of dedicated volunteers. The other is that volunteerism violates the age-old precept that “one gets what one pays for.” In fact, the more dedicated and tireless a volunteer is, the less likely is any remuneration required. There is positive feedback here. Presumably, self-satisfaction derived from influencing good works for the better is reward enough and costs the organization nothing. This circumstance leads to over-utilization of the

volunteer and there lies the rub. The most conscientious and dependable volunteer finds it difficult to say no. The organization repeatedly solicits help from the same group of volunteers with a dependable track record. And the Churchillian declaration, “never.... was so much owed by so many to so few”¹ becomes “never have so few bitten off so much more than they can chew.”

The obvious treatment for volunteeritis can cause serious side effects, when traditionally applied. As an organization's activities expand and the symptoms of volunteeritis begin to appear,² we react by observing that it is unfair to overload the volunteers. A professional staff ought to lift this weight from the shoulders of our staunchest supporters. This, of course, works and staffs grow. As present and potential volunteers see the well-oiled staff machine and defer to it, a new positive feedback circuit is made. And staffs grow more—now at the expense of volunteerism's character. That is, the self-contradictory *mandatory* volunteer (without whom nothing would happen) is replaced by the optional or truly *voluntary* volunteer.

The latter type certainly still play first fiddle for those unique needs of the organization where staff expertise is not expected. These volunteers often sit on governing boards which oversee the organization's health. When their fiscally cautious oversight limits staff growth, volunteer expectations outpace staff capacity. The treatment which shifted primary reliance away from the volunteer is trimmed back and the side effects of understaffing kick in. The symptoms are easily recognized.² Insidious as this volunteeritis cycle is, it might be eradicated with sufficient ingenuity. I propose we form a group to search for solutions. Our staff, however, is too busy with day-to-day business. Any volunteers?

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1. Winston Churchill, *Tribute to the Royal Airforce*, House of Commons, August 20, 1940.

2. Symptoms include missed deadlines, hurried and less well thought-through programs, and generally frenzied management by crisis.