



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A Message from the President of IMPI



As I write this, television, radio and newspapers are filled with pictures and commentary on the events in Egypt, where much of the population has taken to the streets in protest against the country's President. In an attempt to block these protests, the government shut down the country's five Internet service providers so that the protesters could not contact each other via Facebook or Twitter. It may have had some effect, but not enough to stop the protests. Further, it was only several days ago, that similar protests in Tunisia forced their President to resign and the cabinet to be dissolved. There is still turmoil as a new government, satisfactory to the people, tries to form. While it is not clear how much influence the Internet had in these protests, I'm sure they did to some extent. I am also sure that the governments' feeble reactions are effectively in the electronic "dark ages".

The Internet has had profound effect upon all aspects of our society. Think about how it has changed the face of business, education, information transfer, commerce, etc. Many scientific journals appear only in electronic form today. IMPI continues to publish both electronically and in print, although many university libraries are moving away from hard copy and only want electronic versions of their journals. We have had many discussions within IMPI on how to react to such demands, because there are many other subscribers who demand hard copy. For now, this remains a topic of discussion that has not yet been resolved.

IMPI was organized at the time of the 1966 Symposium on Microwave Power held at the University of Alberta in Canada. It was formally established as a nonprofit association with its principal office in Vancouver, Canada and also established the Journal of Microwave Power as the official publication of the Institute. Volume 1 of the Journal was published in 1966.

It was my good fortune to join IMPI in 1967 and I attended my first IMPI symposium in Boston in 1968. I remembered the general disbelief of the audience at a paper delivered by Joel Elman, President of the Atherton Division of Litton Industries, titled "Commercial Microwave Ovens, the Market Today and Tomorrow". It only took another five or six years for this market to begin and prove us all along. But, that is an illustration of how the Journal and IMPI have been at the forefront

of research and development in all the areas of microwave power. The earliest papers on microwaves and biological effects, medical advances, power from space, chemistry, etc. were important parts of IMPI symposia and the Journal. This also led to the creation of many new organizations, such as the Bioelectromagnetics Society (BEMS), whose leaders came from IMPI. IMPI was also the birthplace of many other specialty conferences.

Now, it is again time for IMPI and JMPEE to take the reins of leadership. The power of the Internet has also created problems within our sphere of science. This takes the form of the dissemination of misinformation, largely because of the ever-growing Blogosphere. More and more people believe they have something important to say, so they create their own Blogs. While many are useful, and even valuable, there are many that are filled with misinformation, especially when it comes to microwave ovens and microwave heating, copying and pasting nonsense from each other. For example, here are the few quotations from various Blogs:

- “Microwave Oven Is Hazardous to Your Health”
- “Microwave ovens... And cancer risk”
- “Recent Russian studies have shown that normal microwave cooking converts food protein molecules into carcinogenic substances”.

Or, how about this one, an advertisement for:

- A special blanket or tee shirt for pregnant women “to protect your child within against the risks of everyday radiation”, which is described as coming from cell phones, PDAs, laptops, etc.

Or, how about this one: “Microwaves can lead to cancer... You will need an immune system booster... And rid your body of the free radicals which can now be in your food”. It goes on to promote a drink to “offset carcinogens”.

These may sound silly to the scientists in our field but they are, in fact, serious cases of misinformation that may reach thousands of people because of the sometimes-viral dissemination of Blogs. I have personally tried to respond to many of these, but after being faced

with the daily deluge of misinformation, I began to feel like Sisyphus trying to hold back the misinformation and promote good science and correct information.

This brings me to a plea for assistance from our readers and members: what would you do, and what should we, as IMPI do, to promote good science and respond to all this Internet nonsense? It's a tremendous task because, one thing that you learn as you look at all this, is that once people have made up their minds about something, it is hard to confuse them with facts! But that is the role of journals such as JMPEE: to disseminate facts and overcome superstition and misinformation. Therefore, I would like to see this Journal expand in ways that counteract the misinformation in the Blogosphere, by publishing accurate responses. It won't be enough, but it will be a start. I have also asked the IMPI Board to consider this problem and look at ways that we can react as a scientific society. I would welcome any and all suggestions.

Let me conclude by thanking JMPEE's Editor in Chief, Juan Aguilar, for taking on this very large, difficult, but very important job. I am happy to tell you that he is forming a team that will not only maintain, but also raise the standards of JMPEE to ensure its stature as a premier Journal in the sciences.

Best wishes to all,

Bob Schiffmann