

# COLLOID SCIENCE: past, present and future

Four decades have passed since the inaugural Australian Colloid and Surface Science Student Conference. Russell Crawford and Erica Wanless report on the 40-year history and its celebration.

In 1968, several important events took place that changed the world as we know it. In that year, *Apollo 6*, 7 and 8 spacecraft were launched, Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated, the Boeing 747 made its maiden flight, Pope Paul VI denounced the use of birth control and the first official Australian Colloid and Surface Science Student Conference (ACSSSC) was held in Sydney.

The conception of the ACSSSC took place earlier than 1968. On several occasions between May 1966 and December 1967, Dr Tom Healy (University of Melbourne) and Dr Robert Hunter (University of Sydney) spoke of ways to link their research groups. At that pre-Internet time, both academics realised that being in Australia, and therefore relatively isolated from the larger colloid and surface science groups in Europe, the UK and North America, had the

potential of limiting their progress in research. Tom and Bob believed that if they united their research groups in some way, they stood a better chance of keeping their research at the frontiers of science. The first informal meeting between these two research groups was held in 1967 with a handful of students.

In the several years that followed, the University of Sydney and University of Melbourne research groups travelled either south or north to continue these meetings, and the number of delegates slowly grew. Greater interest was shown in these symposia by both post-graduate students and staff as the years passed. In the first 10 years, other universities gradually began to participate in the conference: University of New South Wales (1972); ANU, Monash University and Flinders University (1973); University of Western Australia, West Australian



Tom Healy and Bob Hunter receiving recognition of their 40 years of mentoring Australian colloid and surface scientists from the Division Chair, Russell Crawford. (Copyright Trudy Schuringa 2007)



Alice Lamb (organiser of the 15th ACSSSC) reminiscences with Tom Healy. (Copyright Trudy Schuringa 2007)



Bob Hunter, Tom Healy and Melanie McGuire enjoy the symposium dinner. (Copyright Trudy Schuringa 2007)



Bob and Tom surrounded by graduates from all 25 Australian Colloid and Surface Science Student Conferences held over the past 40 years. (Copyright Trudy Schuringa 2007)



Bob Hunter responds to the Chair's address with his inimitable flair. (Copyright Trudy Schuringa 2007)