

EDITORIAL

Microscopy by E-mail

Ever have one of those annoying questions about a problem which your sure someone knows the answer to, if you could only find the right person? Let me assure you that it happens every day to lots of people. So what do we do. One can of course, search the literature, or if you are in a large enough organization ask a few colleagues or make some phone calls. Recently, a third option has become available to the scientific community, you can now ask the question over electronic mail (Email).

The Electron Microscopy Center for Materials Research at Argonne National Laboratory has setup a Microscopy Listserver/Mailreflector System, the purpose of which, is to allow the scientific community a centralized Internet address from which questions/comments/answers in the various fields of Microscopy can be rapidly distributed to a list of interested individuals. The whole object of this list server is simple. The knowledge of the microscopy community of the world is by far greater than any one individual. In this age of nearly instantaneous communication, we can all help each other therefore, by having a centralized focal point where any question can be posed, and answers found. In essence, the Microscopy mailserver is a massive, continuous discussion session about microscopy and microanalysis which runs 24 hrs/day, and literally operates every day of the year.

The microscopy listserver has now been in operation since October 1 1993 and currently has had over 1100 registered subscribers who have posted over 1300 messages to the microscopy community at large. These subscribers are from over 30 countries and cover 6 of the 7 continents. Subscribers include the entire gamut of users from novices to experts.

For the purposes of this discussion forum, Microscopy is considered to include all techniques which employ a probe such as: photons (including x-rays), electrons, ions, neutrons, mechanical and/or electromagnetic radiation to form a representation or characterization of the microstructure (internal or external) of any material in either physical and/or life sciences applications.

Some of the more common techniques which are associated with this field include the following: optical microscopy, x-ray microscopy, scanning electron microscopy, transmission electron microscopy, atomic force microscopy, scanning tunneling microscopy, scanning ion microscopy, analytical electron microscopy, high resolution electron microscopy, high voltage electron microscopy, microprobe analysis, specimen preparation, x-ray and electron spectroscopies, etc. (the list can continue).....

There are no charges to become a member of the subscription list nor are there any charges for usage, except for the request that you actively participate in any discussion to which you have a question, comment and/or contribution.

To register with the system

1.) Send an Email message to "LISTSERVER@ANLEMC.MSD.ANL.GOV" within the body of the Email message include the following line:

Subscribe Microscopy "UserName@EMailaddress"

where "EMailaddress" is the electronic mail address of your host computer, and "UserName" is the username by which you are registered on that system.

2.) Within a day or so you will receive a confirmation test message which tests the address that you have supplied to the Microscopy Server. Upon receipt of a reply from the subscriber (i.e. UserName@EMailaddress) to this test message your name will be added to the mailing list. You will then automatically receive copies of "ALL" Email sent to this system.

3.) Anyone may post messages to this list, however, only subscribers will receive copies. One may post messages/comments to this list using any conventional Email system by sending a message to:

"Microscopy@ANLEMC.MSD.ANL.GOV"

4.) To remove your UserName from the list send an Email message to LISTSERVER@ANLEMC.MSD.ANL.GOV containing the line:

"Unsubscribe Microscopy UserName@EMailaddress"

Once you subscribe and your Email address is verified (to minimize bad Email traffic) then you will automatically receive forwarded mail sent by subscribers of the list. Typically there are about 2 to 10 messages/day posted on the listserver.

All discussion/comments/questions which you would like to be distributed to the subscription list should be done by sending the text as a simple Email message

To: Microscopy@anlemc.msd.anl.gov

All subscribers to the list (including yourself!) will automatically receive copies of the message you post.

As a courtesy to the subscribers of this list users are asked to please indicate in the subject line of their message a reasonable descriptive title of the comment/inquiry. Also preface the description by the conventional abbreviation of the type of microscopy you are interested such as LM, IRM, XRM, TEM, SEM, AFM, STM, μ Probe..... For example, if you are interested in optical microscopy and have a question about staining then a Title/Subject line for your message might be

Subject: LM - Need help on Staining Cells

or if you are interested in TEM analysis of dislocations then

Subject: TEM - Dislocation Loop Analysis

and so forth.

There are very few rules, pertaining to the use of the mailservers. It is an unmoderated discussion session, and the SysOp will only intervene if things appear to go beyond some reasonable bounds. Also, this listserver/mailreflector is being operated totally on a voluntary effort. There are no actual funds allocated to it, and it is as a result being run on a miniscule budget. Suggestions for improvement are always welcome, however users should not expect massive time and effort to be put into the system to make software improvements, since there are no funds dedicated to this operation.

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