The sasCIF ASCII format allows simple text tools to get at data. Although no-one could claim that there were any definitive answers to any of these questions, it was clear that there were some positive movements in that direction, however glacial.

Clearly portable, widely supported, self-describing file formats would assist users greatly with using data from a variety of facilities. There is still controversy whether the best approach is to develop and widely distribute routines for converting the formats used into one or more "standard formats" once they have been determined or to rewrite existing code to use the new formats? The advantage of the former is that it is less work for the programmers. In the discussions both sasCIF and Nexus appear to be viable candidates for "standard formats". ImageCIF (for 2-D) and sasCIF could fit naturally together and would be likely to get the stamp of approval from IUCr. It was resolved that new facilities should be encouraged to support one or both of sasCIF and Nexus and see which meets the needs best, as well as giving feedback data for the developers. Tom Irving, BioCAT, and Wim Bras, Dubble CRG, said they would endeavor to do so.

Can we move towards a "gold standard" software package or packages? It was recognized that currently available packages are hard to find and documentation varies widely in adequacy still, despite many efforts by various people to improve this situation. The basic problem is that these outreach activities are generally too time-consuming for busy developers to support. The group was informed that the CCP13 project had recently taken SAS as part of its purview. It was suggested that Mark Shotton (the main CCP13 maintainer) should be invited to visit various facilities with established code bases to get a handle on the magnitude of the problem and see what can be done. People who would like to help in this way should contact Mark at m.shotton@dl.ac.uk. The workshop ended with a discussion of future canSAS meetings. There seemed to be a consensus that a "technical" canSAS meeting should be scheduled in 18 months or so. The next international SAS meeting in 2002 would be the next opportunity to communicate progress with the larger community of users.

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SAS99, XIth International Conference on Small Angle Scattering, 17th-20th May 1999, Brookhaven National Laboratory

The XIth International Conference on Small Angle Scattering was held at the Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL) on Long Island, New York in the USA. BNL was founded in 1947 on the site of the U.S. Army's former Camp Upton, by a non-profit educational consortium called Associated Universities, Inc. under contract to the Atomic Energy Agency. Brookhaven Science Associates now operate BNL for DOE, they are a partnership of the State University of New York at Stony Brook and the Battelle Memorial Institute.

The Brookhaven facility carries out basic and applied research in physical, biomedical and environmental sciences together with energy based technologies at its various centres of excellence. These include an Accelerator Test facility for High Energy Physics and accelerator research, an Alternating Gradient Synchrotron to provide protons for High Energy Physics, a High Flux Beam Reactor for neutron experiments and The National Synchrotron Light Source with X-ray and vacuum ultra violet rings. They are in the process of commissioning RHIC, a Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider with a 3.8km diameter ring, used in the study of atomic particles.

With a meeting of this size it would be impossible to give justice to all the topics that were up for discussion so instead what follows are a few of the highlights.

One of the features of the meeting was the excellent work now being carried out at a number of third generation sources in the field of microfocus X-ray scattering. In particular Christian Riekel gave an excellent presentation on the recent advances in microfocus work carried out at the ESRF on beamline ID13. These included new developments in the field of microfocus collimation *e.g.* capillaries, mirrors and waveguides which can give useful X-ray

beams down to 2μm, small enough to examine cellulose microfibrils in native flax. There was also an interesting presentation on Fruit Fly muscle by Tom Irving using his beamline at the APS in microfocus configuration. Dmitri Svergun presented some very interesting analysis on solution scattering work carried out at the ESRF utilising newly developed software. Veronica James, who spoke about her work on using hair as a marker for breast cancer and insulin dependent diabetes, presented the most radical lecture of the meeting. A lively discussion was held after the presentation on the merit of the work, which included contributions from the floor of the meeting from others that study the subject.

On the Wednesday of the meeting the plenary session was given over to a tribute to Paul W. Schmidt with contributions given by colleagues and friends during his distinguished career. Prof. John Squire gave a "virtuoso" performance giving the conference lecture. "Movements in a Molecular Symphony - Diffraction Probing of Nature's Linear Motor" was a very enjoyable combination of science and music. The classical music was an agreeable addition to the 3-D images, which made understanding the structural complexities of muscle much easier.

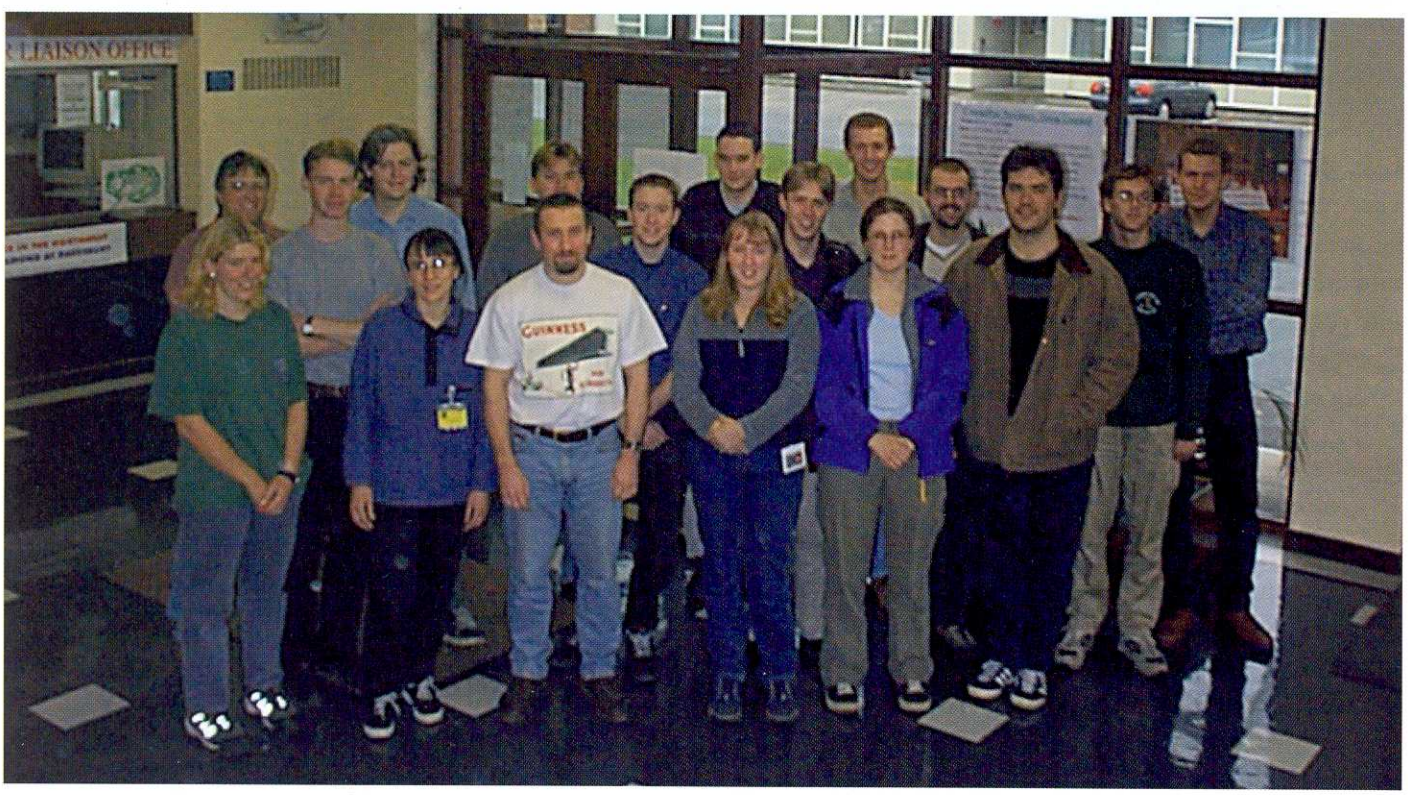
The final news item from the conference is the contest for the location of the next SAS meeting. In a "not-so-close" contest with the ESRF, the Italian party from TRIESTE won the right to host the next SAS meeting in Venice in August of 2001.

Nick Terrill
Daresbury Laboratory

CCP13 and NCD Training Workshop, 23rd-24th November 1999, Daresbury Laboratory

A training workshop was held at Daresbury Laboratory on 23rd-24th November, 1999, to demonstrate data collection and analysis in fibre diffraction and non-crystalline diffraction experiments. This workshop was targeted primarily at new PhD students and post-doctoral researchers who were unfamiliar with fibre diffraction and SAXS/WAXS data collection techniques and the tools available for data reduction and analysis in the CCP13 and non-crystalline diffraction (NCD) software suites.

The workshop commenced with an introductory lecture by Nick Terrill followed by a demonstration



Delegates at the first CCP13 and NCD Training Workshop at Daresbury Laboratory, 23rd-24th November 1999.