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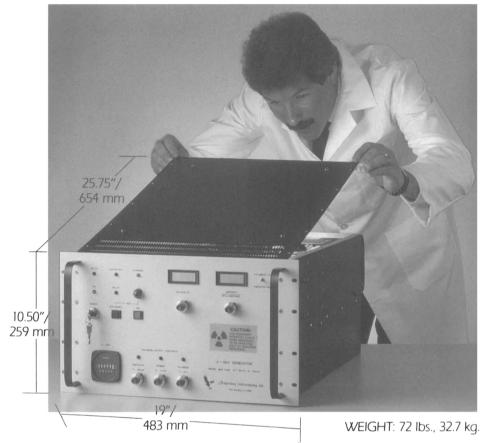
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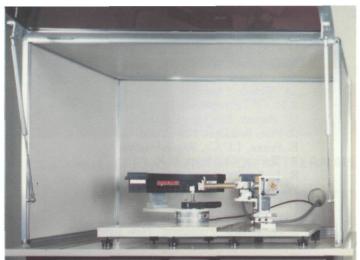
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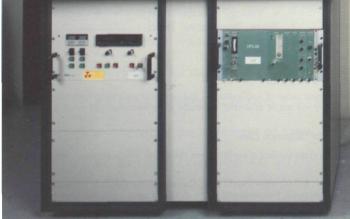
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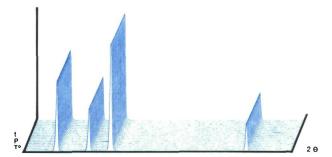
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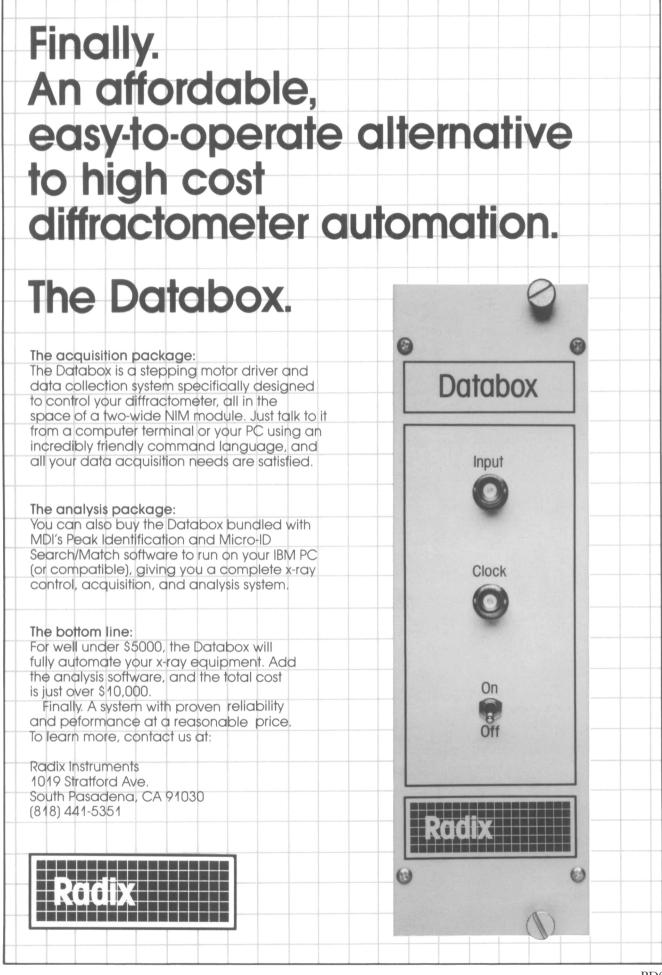
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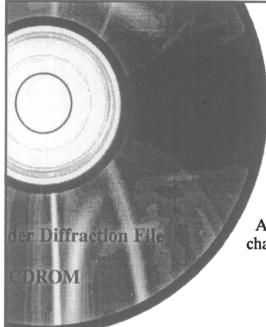
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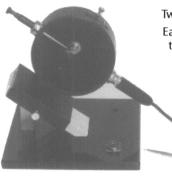
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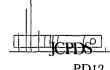
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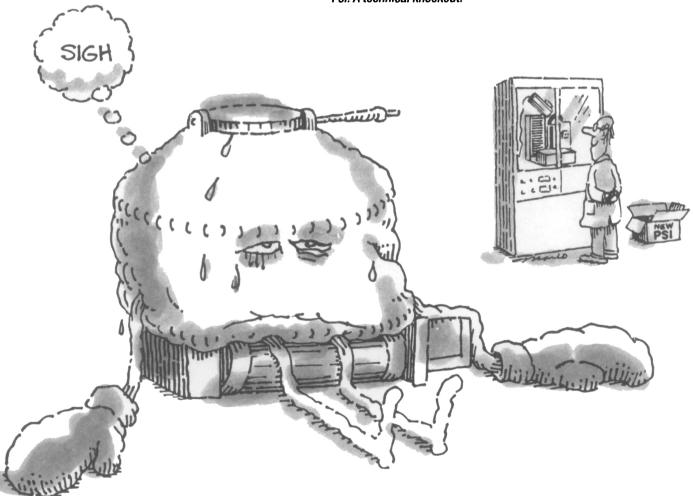
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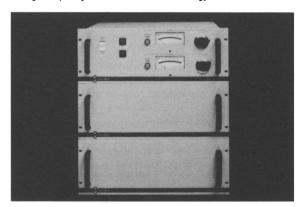
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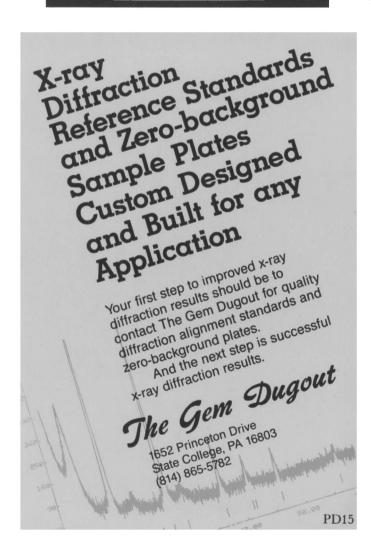


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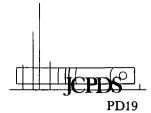
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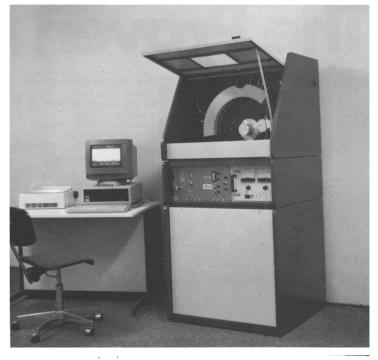
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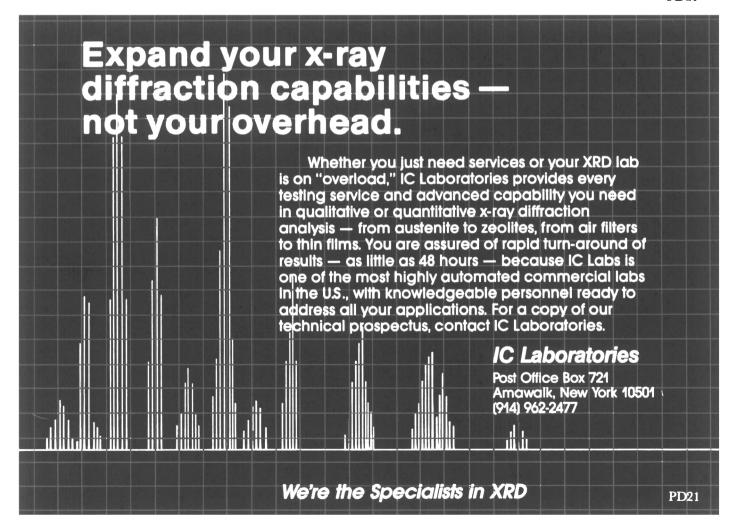
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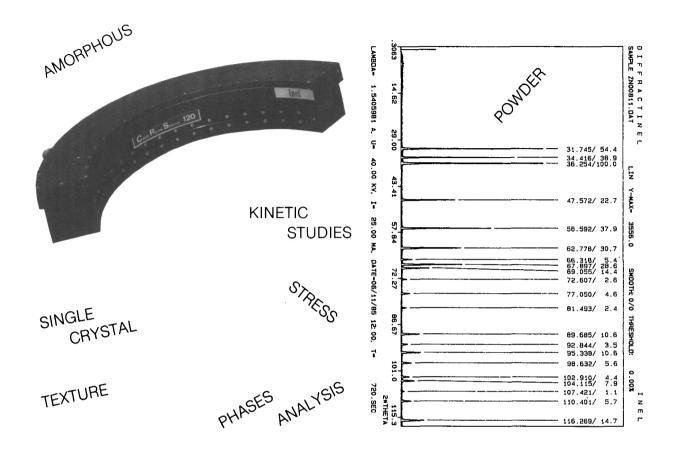




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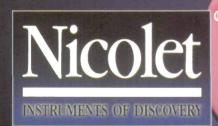
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Editorial

Powder Diffraction in Education

The identification and characterization of materials by powder diffraction is a topic which should be taught in all chemistry, physics, material science and geology departments. Unfortunately, not all departments include the topic in their undergraduate curricula, and, when they do, it is rarely more than a single experiment in a laboratory type course. Only the material science programs may regularly offer a series of experiments or a full course in X-ray diffraction analysis, ... even here theory is rarely involved. Chemistry departments, in particular, due to their emphasis on the organic field and its many new instrumental methods of identification, often ignore powder diffraction to the point where it is seldom mentioned.

Recognizing that there is a lack of training of analysts in the academic environment, the International Centre for Diffraction Data has made efforts to fill this gap. For over ten years now the International Centre has had an Education Subcommittee whose goals have included the setting up and running of short courses in identification and in the preparation of teaching aids for inclusion in these courses; courses have also been run in industry and academia. The educational materials have been made available, essentially at cost, to anyone desiring to use them. Both the materials and the short course have evolved over the years through use in the International Centre's own courses and in those taught by some Subcommittee members at their own universities. The short course currently given includes the evaluation of diffraction data as well as the identification of phases using the Powder Diffraction File in both manual and computer forms. Separate, special courses, taught from time to time, have been developed for mineralogy and forensic materials. As a supplement to the phase identification course material the International Centre has prepared a Methods and Practices Manual, available to short course attendees, on all aspects of experimental techniques. In addition to the products of the International Centre, members of the Subcommittee have assisted in preparing the Audio Short Course on X-Ray Diffraction distributed by the American Chemical Society.

The success of the short course program is indicated by the attendance and responses of the attendees. For over ten years courses have been presented several times each year at the International Centre Headquarters as well as at various facilities around the United States and overseas. Attendees range, typically, from new analysts to very experienced diffractionists; the design of the course has allowed all to learn new material of benefit to their analytical assignments. New diffractionists learn the basis of phase identification and the interaction of diffraction information and chemical information in the confirmation of results. Experienced diffractionists learn the need for accuracy and methods for achieving it plus other applications of powder diffraction analysis, such as quantitative analysis. This course augments the several experimental courses provided at various universities for the training of technologists in the diffraction laboratory.

In spite of the success of the short courses, there is a need to reinstall the teaching of X-ray powder diffraction into the curricula of academic programs. All scientists need to know the value of X-ray diffraction methods and their uses and limitations. They are the requestors who supply most of the samples submitted to the diffraction laboratory. Many do not appreciate the difficulties in the full characterization of a material. I have had requestors respond to my question for background information on the sample, with "you do not need any information as it will bias your results." They did not realize how much time might be needed to fully analyze a pattern. And, when these requestors returned for results, the answers they sought were usually the hardest to explain.

The revived interest in superconducting materials has also reaffirmed the recognition that there are problems for which powder diffraction may be the only suitable technique. For example, the structure of the superconducting phases has been determined by X-ray and neutron powder diffraction. Or again, it is absolutely necessary to confirm the presence of the appropriate phase by powder diffraction prior to expending time measuring properties on incorrectly prepared samples. One of the continuing problems of this research is educating the experimentalists that their material must be properly characterized. The need for courses in diffraction analysis is apparent.

The present educational problem is not that material is not available for present courses, but rather the lack of availability of time in busy curricula for the adequate instruction of students in diffraction analysis. One alternative is to have video materials prepared for individual instruction at a user's convenience. This approach is excellent where it is employed for explaining the use of equipment, but falls short where it involves the interpretation of results, if there is also no chance for interaction with a competent instructor. Experience and practice are the best teachers in this field, but the availability of some personal assistance is invaluable in the early learning stages of any course.

The International Centre continues to have interest in the development of instructional material for training in the use of powder diffraction data. Suggestions as to how to improve the present instruction packages and for new materials that would be useful in courses are very welcome and should be sent to Ron Anderson, Departments Editor of this Journal, who is Chairman of the Education Subcommittee. Contributions for the Methods and Practices Manual should be submitted to this Journal; most of the contents of the Manual are reprints of articles which have appeared here.

Deane K. Smith Editor-in-Chief