It gives me great pleasure to write this short message for your special January 2008 issue of Kobunshi. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on successfully completing your restructuring and publishing for the first time this last April full English pages to improve the international visibility of Kobunshi. Your continuous effort to reach out and better serve the members of the Society of Polymer Science Japan (SPSJ) is indeed commendable. It is a very bold step you have taken, a step in tandem with the trend of globalization and internationalization that is sweeping through every walk of life of society these days.

SPSJ as far as I know has always had a very strong Committee of International Relations and network base. Over the years that I have been involved with the Pacific Polymer Federation, of which SPSJ is a founding member, SPSJ has always taken a leading role in forging cooperation among the polymer communities in this part of the world and in fostering closer relationship of the polymer societies in the region. It has been responsible in the forming of the South/East Asian Polymer Scientists Network in the mid 1990, a strategic group of polymer scientists representing various countries from the South and East Asia regions. The aim of the network was to help bring greater exchange of expertise and information among polymer scientists in these countries. SPSJ also initiated and published the World Polymer Organizations, a detailed compilation of information of the Polymer Societies and divisions of Polymer Sections of Chemical Societies of the world. This is a handy directory of polymer communities and their activities in various countries and a valuable source of national contact points for polymer scientists. And of course SPSJ has been the host several times over in organizing the Pacific Polymer Conference with immense success, including the coming 10th PPC to be held in Kobe this December. With a huge membership of well over twelve thousand and the solid backing of the industries, we believe SPSJ is well poised to play an even bigger role in providing the necessary leadership in the international arena of polymer science and technology in the coming decades. And in so doing, it is hoped that economically disadvantaged countries are able to benefit in the educational field from the spread of knowledge on polymer science and technology via your activities.

It is expected that polymers will play a major role in driving the economy of the 21st century, the so-called Age of Polymers. It is envisaged that new concepts into polymer science will be fueled by developments in chemistry, physics and biology, especially life sciences and materials physics. In short, polymer science has evolved into an all encompassing subject that embodies a diverse range of disciplines. Very often, we are no longer dealing with simple polymers but sophisticated polymer-based systems that require input far beyond chemistry, physics and biology. In this context, controlled syntheses of polymers and polymerizations to yield precisely defined products are of utmost importance. Greater effort is expected to be directed at designing and synthesizing stronger and
lighter polymeric structural hybrid materials for increased engineering applications. Sustainability of the world's resources is a big concern and renewed effort on development of greater use of renewable natural polymers is fast gaining momentum. Advances made in this area would reduce our dependence on fossil oil as our source of raw materials. Environmental concern has spurred greater use of renewable raw materials and polymers in the manufacturing sector. Emphasis has been on green catalysts, non-toxic solvent system and atom efficient synthesis in clean manufacturing processes. There is another important area of interest on bioremediation and environmental pollution control using smart polymeric materials and bionanotechnology, in addition to active research into biodegradation of commercially available polymers. The rapid advances made in the emerging area of biomacromolecular science have pushed back the frontiers of genomics and proteomics and affording for the first time a better understanding of the molecular basis of diseases. The convergence of chemistry, physics, engineering and biology has open up many possibilities of direct biomedical applications of polymer science in diagnostics, therapeutics and pharmaceutics, thus elevating the level and quality of medical and health care for the society at large. The design of novel functional materials for drug delivery, artificial tissue, molecular machines and molecular recognition to mimic biological functions is of great importance in this aspect.

It is hoped that Kobunshi under its new look is a useful vehicle to better disseminate the latest trends in contemporary polymer science and technology around the world through its network of members and international polymer community.