Microsymposium

Traditional educational methods to create the future generation of crystallographers: the international school of crystallography (ISCoC)

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The past two years will be remembered forever by all with different feelings and memories. One of the most dramatic consequences of the pandemic was that our entire lives, both working and social, moved online. Online teaching, studying, and attending events became a common and natural behavior. The development of tools that provide online services were very fast and a plethora of them were made available to everyone. Personal Computers, laptops, tablets, and smartphones multiplied in all houses.

But when restrictions were lifted and people were able to get together again, everyone seemed more than ready to jump back into an apparent “new” life, filled with in-person activities. This applied to the working world as well, with the return to in-person meetings and to travelling around the globe for both business and pleasure.

The International School of Crystallography (ISCoC) has been organizing annual courses covering different aspects and applications of crystallography since the 1970s, and has been deeply affected by the pandemic as well. In fact, the 2020 course was abruptly cancelled, and the 2021 course was held online because of the persisting restrictions for travelling abroad. The 2022 course, finally held in person, was an exceptional event: the students were clearly eager to meet and spend time studying together.

The general feeling was that what had been missed in the past two years was not only the possibility to stay together and exchange experience with their fellow students, but most importantly the chances of direct interactions with the teachers. Learning from the experts, by directly engaging and asking questions in person during lectures and social events is something always capitalized on during the courses. To reinforce the close interactions between students and teachers, workshops are also always organized, and they are generally very much attended and appreciated. Many long-life collaborations were born during the courses in the past years, and we hope that this will still happens in the future.

Another important aspect of the courses of the ISCoC is the place: the Ettore Majorana Foundation and Center for Scientific Culture (EMFCSC) is located in Erice, a very small and isolated village in the western part of Sicily (Italy): the town is a very historical place that, beside restaurants, offers very little in the way of socialization. The School organizes social events and gatherings in addition to the scientific activities, thus reinforcing the relationships that grow among students and between students and teachers during the time spent together.

The poster will present statistics from the past events, together with comments from students and teachers.