



MRS Bulletin

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The “we” in MRS

To the Editor:

I was delighted to be able to help provide a glimpse of the Materials Research Society’s growth in the recent *MRS Bulletin* coverage of the Society’s 40th anniversary (see the November 2013 issue of *MRS Bulletin*, p. 958). MRS has a rich history that is impossible to capture in a few short pages. Everyone who has been involved with MRS over the past four decades has his/her own memories of the role they played in helping move materials research forward and should be proud of their contributions.

Over the years at MRS, I learned much about teamwork, the power of “what if,” and even a little bit about materials science. (“It’s *meta-STAY-ble*, *Gail*, not *me-TAS-table*,” John Baglin, chair of the Publications Committee explained to me in the early 1980s. Yep, so much to learn.)

Although the interdisciplinary science and broad curiosity make up the foundation of the Society, MRS would not have thrived without its “interdisciplinary” teams—including members, policymakers, staff, educators, and benefactors. And new groups continue to come forward and be embraced. Kevin Jones and his colleagues at the University of Florida are now engaging the liberal arts community through a new course. I recall a general talk at an MRS meeting back in the late 1980s or early 1990s where the speaker applauded the audience of scientists for their special knowledge that he rather proudly pointed out was beyond the reach of non-scientists. What a pity. Now this new academic program will surface in the future to break down other barriers.

There are four definitions for the word “we”:

- 1) the inclusive “we” (we are family, says the father)
- 2) the royal “we” (we are not happy, says the queen)
- 3) “you” (we need to drive slower, says the traffic officer)
- 4) the political “we” (we need to change the country, says the senator)

Half of these “we’s” are used to bring us together, the other half keep us at a distance.* MRS has been the “we” that invites inclusion. I hope the “we” in MRS continues to listen to the ideas of its team members and never settles down.

Metastable. I now know how to pronounce it. And I think I know what it means.

Gail A. Oare
 MRS staff director from 1984 to retirement in 2011

* *The Secret Life of Pronouns—What Our Words Say About Us* (James W. Pennebaker, Bloomsbury Press, 2011).

The collage features several images and text excerpts from the MRS Bulletin. At the top right, there's a header for 'OPINION LETTERS TO THE EDITOR'. Below it, there are several small images: a group of people at a meeting, a man in a suit, and a group of people in a laboratory setting. Text snippets are interspersed throughout, including:

- '40 years, one vision' with the URL www.mrs.org/bulletin by Gail A. Oare
- 'Opening up the dialogue' discussing the Society's 40th anniversary and the role of the Bulletin.
- 'Building new committees' mentioning the formation of new groups like the Publications Committee.
- 'Saving the planet' discussing environmental issues and the role of MRS.
- 'The Secret Life of Pronouns' snippet from the footnotes.