

## Editorial – 30 years of Ancient TL

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Thirty years ago, in the autumn of 1977, the first issue of Ancient TL was published by David Zimmerman at Washington University in St Louis, USA. The introduction to that first issue was prescient in its objectives for the journal, “Ancient TL is a quarterly newsletter intended primarily to facilitate communications of helpful and practical information between researchers actively involved in thermoluminescence dating. The major subjects of contribution are expected to be experimental techniques and new equipment, TL data of various phosphors and minerals, and data and information on dosimetry and radioactivity determinations. Other topics may include lists of recent publications, announcements of meetings, lists of theses available, and readers’ queries.” Sadly David Zimmerman did not live long enough to see the extent to which the journal achieved all of these objectives.

The journal has regularly provided information on forthcoming conferences, including the PACT meetings of the 1980’s, the Solid State Dosimetry meetings, the International Seminars and Conferences on Luminescence and Electron Spin Resonance Dating, the UK Luminescence meetings, and more recently the New World Luminescence Dating Workshops and the Asia Pacific Luminescence Dating conferences. A bibliography of recent publications has been a consistent feature of the journal, enabling readers to keep abreast of publications in the field. This job has grown in size as the field has matured over the years!

In the 30 years that the journal has now operated, it has published a wide range of articles on thermoluminescence, optically stimulated luminescence, dosimetry and equipment. In addition, many papers on the closely related topic of Electron Spin Resonance (ESR) have also been published. What has characterised the journal has been the mixture of subjects addressed. As foreseen by Zimmerman, the topics cover both the scientific results obtained, but also, and equally importantly, the practical information required to successfully operate a luminescence or electron spin resonance laboratory. Thus, back issues of Ancient TL hold a wealth of information on methods of sample collection, on laboratory illumination, on the impact of security x-ray scanners on samples, on the isolation of quartz or other minerals, and many other topics.

Much of this information is as relevant today as it was when it was published. In recent years a major project has been undertaken to make back issues of Ancient TL available electronically. This was begun three years ago in 2004, and I am pleased to report that this process is now complete, with all back issues now freely available via the Ancient TL website ([www.aber.ac.uk/ancient-tl](http://www.aber.ac.uk/ancient-tl)). I am grateful to Helena Rodnight and Daniel Richter for their enormous help in completing this task.

In order to help readers to find information in previous issues, the website contains two means of searching previous issues. The first is an index of authors of all papers. This lists every paper published by each author, and has hyperlinks that will display a PDF of the papers suitable for viewing on screen or printing out. Using standard web browsers one can use the Ctrl-F function to search for text in the titles of the papers (e.g. calibration, fading, laboratory lighting etc). The second method for searching for articles is through an EndNote database provided by Daniel Richter. For those with access to EndNote this database can be downloaded and interrogated.

### Theses online

A new initiative, starting in December 2007 to coincide with the publication of this issue of the journal, is for the web site of Ancient TL to also make available electronic copies of research theses in order to increase the accessibility of these to the community. In certain countries it is commonplace for theses to consist of a number of published articles. In these cases, there is probably little additional information in the thesis, except perhaps an overview of the papers, and additionally there may be copyright issues which would make placing them on the web difficult. However, in many other countries theses are not directly based on published papers. Whether for masters degrees or doctorates, theses have often been difficult to get hold of, and consequently read by only a limited number of people. This is the case for both recent and older theses.

Ancient TL is now acting as a host, enabling the authors of these theses to make their work available as a PDF. Authors wishing to submit their theses are requested to send a single PDF, containing the complete thesis, to the Editor. The intention is to periodically list the complete suite of theses that are available via this web site in the pages of this journal.

**The future**

The fields of luminescence and electron spin resonance have undergone dramatic growth in the last 30 years. An impression of this growth can be gained by glancing through the bibliographies published in Ancient TL over this time. In the first decade of the journal the bibliography rarely exceeded 20 papers, while now it is not uncommon for Ann Wintle to list over 150 papers. So what is the role of Ancient TL in the future, as the field continues to develop?

Continued growth in luminescence and ESR is likely to see the number of laboratories rapidly increasing around the world. As this occurs, the objectives of Ancient TL outlined 30 years ago, namely to facilitate communications of helpful and practical information between researchers actively involved in the field, become ever more important. The journal continues to provide an avenue through which scientific results, and practical advice can be disseminated through both paper and electronic formats. By providing a venue for listing recently completed research theses and publications it helps to “glue” the community together, assisting in the rapid dissemination of information that has helped the field to grow so rapidly and successfully. The founders of Ancient TL felt that communication between scientists was vital. This remains as important today as it did then. I hope that electronic access will enable the latest generation of scientists in this field to benefit from the accrued knowledge in the subject.

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