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Singapore forges ahead to harnessing light in the 21st century

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Synthetic Aperture Radar

Digital Micromirrors

Underwater 3D Imaging

HWIL

Superconductors

Singapore Forges Ahead

Image Amplifier

Light Constructions

SPIE Scene

Editorial


Education

Industry Focus

Product Briefs

Business Briefs

International
Technical Groups

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In late 1998, more than 50 participants attended an intensive training course entitled "Photronics Technology for the 21st Century: Principles and Applications," which was held at the School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE), Nanyang Technological Univ. (NTU; Singapore). The course was jointly sponsored by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO; Vienna, Austria), the International Centre for Science and High Technology (ICS; Trieste, Italy), and NTU. The local organizer of the course was the Photronics Research Group (PRG) of the Microelectronic Centre, School of EEE, with the assistance of the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE), NTU.

The successful organization of this training course, the first one of its kind in Singapore, is an important milestone in the evolution and growth of the PRG. It also signals the beginning of further development in education and training activities in this important technology in Singapore and the region. In addition, the formation of the Photronics Association of Southeast Asia will further promote and stimulate international cooperation for the advancement of photronics technology in harnessing the enormous power of light in the 21st century.

The objectives of the course were to provide the participants with a working knowledge in the various areas of photronics technology; to promote the applications of photronics technology for education, research, development, and manufacturing; to establish a network of people and institutions linking Singapore and the Southeast Asian countries; and to develop a plan of action for future cooperation and collaborations. The participants were from a wide range of organizations, including universities, research institutions, and the industry. They were from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

In addition to hearing lectures, participants visited the laboratories in NTU, and the Gintic Institute of Manufacturing Technology (Gintic) and the Productivity and Standards Board (PSB) of Singapore. To

foster closer interaction and promote future collaboration, two discussion sessions provided the participants more opportunity for interaction and networking.

The Photonics Research Group (PRG) is one of the four key research groups within the Microelectronics Centre in the School of EEE, NTU. The PRG was set up in early 1994 to coordinate and spearhead research in the fields of photonics. It aims to be a center of excellence for photonics research and education in the region. Members of the PRG have been playing a leading role in Singapore and the Asia-Pacific region through the organization of international conferences and active participation in professional society activities. Indeed, their vision and leadership has been a driving force in many events: the organization of APCOT '90, the Asia-Pacific Conference in Optical Technology held in Oct., 1990 in Singapore; the founding of the Singapore Chapter of SPIE in 1995; the organization of the International Symposium on Microelectronics and Assembly in June, 1997; and more recently, the cooperation with PSB in the development of training courses for industry, the launching of the Singapore Optics webpage, and the participation in the Optics Forum and Workshop in July, 1998. Their dedication and perseverance has also led to the first cooperation between the SPIE and the School of EEE for the organization of ISPA '99, the International Symposium on Photonics and Applications, to be held in Singapore, from 29 Nov. to 3 Dec., 1999.

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[This Issue Home](#) | [OE Reports Home](#) | [SPIE Web Home](#)

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