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Editorial

Coatings 2021 Outstanding Reviewer Award: Announcement and Interview with the Winner Dr. Valentina Marascu

Coatings Editorial Office

MDPI AG, St. Alban-Anlage 66, 4052 Basel, Switzerland; coatings@mdpi.com

The Coatings Editorial Board and Editorial Team would like to acknowledge the time and energy dedicated by the reviewers of manuscripts submitted to Coatings. Based on the quantity, timeliness, and quality of the reviews in 2021, we congratulate Dr. Valentina Marascu as one of the winners on her excellent performance and wish her all the best for her future career.

Interview with the Winner

1. Could you give us a brief introduction of yourself to the readers?

I am a Scientific Research Assistant at the National Institute for Laser, Plasma, and Radiation Physics (INFLPR), in the Low Temperature Plasma Laboratory, 409 Atomistilor Street, Po-Box Mg-36, 077125 Magurele, Romania. My education background includes a Postdoctoral Fellowship in the frame of tritium retention experiments; a PhD in Physics (obtained with a Summa cum Laudae score); an M.Sc. in Physics with a specialisation in optics, lasers, and applications; and a B.Sc. in Mathematics, with a specialisation in mathematics–computer science. Complementary to my experimental research activities, my occupations are extended to experimental physics laboratories, internships, training with undergraduates and graduate students; I am a chair member at various scientific events; a jury member at national and international conferences; a member of the organisational committee of international conferences; a reviewer for different journals; and a guest editor, volunteer, and exhibitor participant at scientific events.

2. What is your current research and why did you choose this research field?

Currently, I am working in the field of plasma physics, at low and atmospheric pressures. In addition, my current research activities include studies of RF (13.56 MHz) Ar, He, H2, and D2 plasma discharges' interaction with W surface materials, in order to obtain details regarding various surface defects produced via erosion, melting, etc., phenomena. Herein, during plasma–W material interaction, additional W dust is formed, and collected for further analyses. Furthermore, I am conducting additional research studies dedicated to deuterium and tritium retention in W materials. The proposed lab-scaled experiments will conduct research suitable for the fusion research domain. Another part of my research activity includes the characterization and interpretation of various materials via thermo-desorption, LSC, FTIR, optical microscopy, AFM, LVEM-TEM/SEM, profilometry, and contact angle methods.

3. Which research topics do you think are of particular interest to the research community in the coming years?

In my opinion, the coming years will bring "an explosion" of opportunities, in all research topics. I think two topics/fields will play a major role, i.e., artificial intelligence (AI) and green energies. Herein, artificial intelligence will offer a developed and enhanced solution platform for all sectors: smartphones, smartwatches, laptops, TVs, satellites, rockets, airplanes, cruise ships, robots, cars, and so on. The second field will be represented by green energies. Herein, along with the well-known solar cells, wind turbines, hydrogen fuel, etc., nuclear fusion may become, in the near future, a suitable approach to obtaining

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energy without polluting our environment. A well-known fusion facility is ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor) which is currently under construction in southern France.

4. Have you ever encountered any difficulties when you conduct research? How did you overcome them?

There are some difficulties in the research sector. The first of them is the information. In order to start a small experiment, you have to read/learn an important volume of the dedicated literature. Herein, you have to synthesise the information and put it carefully into practice. In my experiments, each time I had to search articles and correlate them with the theoretical phenomena's description. Another difficulty is represented by the research funds, which usually are not enough. For this problem, I suggest wisely using everything that can be used inside labs. Human resources can be inserted into the list of difficulties. Nowadays, the research sector is not seen, by the young generation, as so attractive. The lack of money, correlated with investing an enormous amount of time for personal development, will certainly contribute to an unattractive work field.

5. What qualities do you think young scientists need?

I think young scientists should possess a curious and open mind, a capability to create and deliver new concepts, ideas, and prototypes. Additionally, a young scientist should be a good "storyteller" in order to present the scientific achievements in a such manner that everyone understands the explained research activity. Moreover, a mathematical background should not be avoided, because it is the foundation of scientific activities.

6. Can you briefly describe the key to a happy laboratory life?

The key to a happy laboratory life can be described in one word: respect. By respecting your colleagues, you can develop a healthy scientific dialog with everyone. Just keep in mind that each person has a specific place inside the larger science community.

7. If you have the opportunity, will you actively apply to attend academic conferences? What do you think you can learn from participating in conferences that are different from working in a lab?

I attend many conferences (national and international) as a participant or as an organizer, and as a volunteer. I strongly encourage the young generation of future scientists to attend many conferences because the benefits are huge. First, young scientists will gain a strong self-confidence in conducting and proposing their own experiments; they can get in touch with various senior scientists who can offer them useful advice. In addition, they can interact with the feedback from the science community concerning their experiments. Another benefit is a possible human social bond, which can lead to future collaborations.

8. As an excellent reviewer, could you please share your most unforgettable review experience with us?

One of my most unforgettable review experiences, for sure, was the day when I received the invitation from the Coatings journal to become a reviewer. That moment will remain unforgettable for me. Being a reviewer implies two major milestones: to make additional free time for reviewing papers, and a passion for the research domain. The second unforgettable review experience was the day that I received the email certifying that my first reviewed article was accepted for publication. Even if that article was not mine, the joy was enormous for me because after many years of learning and working in the research sector, I was able to join the reviewing experts. I hope that in the future, there will be more researchers who want to be a part of the reviewer community, in order to help each other and evolve together by publishing high-quality articles.

9. We are an open access journal. How do you think open access impacts reviewers and authors?

The open access journal seems to have become the major player in the publication community. For authors, this journal type has both advantages and disadvantages. The biggest advantage is the publication speed, which could be within one month. Another advantage is the visibility; in this manner, everyone can read the article. The main disadvantage is the price of publication because the prices are not correlated with the amount of money that is usually received from research projects. Globally, research projects are unbalanced in terms of funding. In developed countries, funding has a higher index than in other countries, including in Europe. Inside the EU, there is a big difference between project funding in Western Europe compared to Eastern Europe. For reviewers, the open access journals are okay in terms of the transparency of the process. Additionally, having the possibility to publish with discounts is a big plus.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Short Biography of Author

Dr. Valentina Marascu is a Scientific Research Assistant in the Low Temperature Plasma Laboratory at the National Institute for Laser, Plasma, and Radiation Physics (INFLPR) in Magurele, Romania. Her educational background includes a Postdoctoral Fellowship in the frame of tritium retention experiments; a PhD in Physics; an M.Sc. in Physics with a specialisation in optics, lasers, and applications; and a B.Sc. in Mathematics, with a specialisation mathematics–computer science. Currently, Dr. Marascu works in the field of plasma physics, where she studies the RF (13.56 MHz) Ar, He, H2, and D2 plasma discharges' interaction with W surface materials, in order to obtain details regarding various surface defects, produced via erosion, melting, etc., phenomena. Herein, during plasma–W material interaction, additional W dust is formed, and collected for further analyses. In addition, Dr. Marascu is involved in experiments dedicated to deuterium and tritium retention in W materials. Her proposed lab-scaled experiments will conduct research suitable for the fusion research domain. Another part of her research activity involves the characterization and interpretation of various materials via thermo-desorption, LSC, FTIR, optical microscopy, AFM, LVEM-TEM/SEM, profilometry, and contact angle methods. Complementary to her experimental research activities, Dr. Marascu's occupations are extended to experimental physics laboratories, internships, training with undergraduates and graduate students; her role as a chair member at various scientific events; as a jury member at national and international conferences; as a member of the organisational committee of international conferences; as a reviewer for different journals; and as guest editor, volunteer, and exhibitor participant at scientific events. (Photo of myself at work; I was writing a small report with my experiments).