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## Editorial

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**Biographical notes:** A.H.W. Ngan, BSc (Eng), PhD, MIM, CSci, is Professor at the Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Hong Kong. His research interest includes electron microscopy of materials, dislocation theory, microstructure-mechanical property relationship, nanoindentation, and so on. He has published more than 100 papers in refereed journals and conference proceedings.

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Since its invention some two decades ago, nanoindentation has rapidly become a routine method for characterising the mechanical properties of material surfaces and coatings. The original scope for a new technique to measure the elastic modulus and hardness of hard materials, without the need to image the indent size as in traditional hardness testing, has quickly been widened to include many other exciting applications. Notable developments include new protocols for analysing soft materials, such as most biological tissues, thin films and coatings, and so on. The already-realised and forthcoming contributions of nanoindentation-related techniques to surface science and engineering research are tremendous. The purpose of this special issue is to present a collection of examples illustrating the state-of-the-art developments of nanoindentation and its applications to surface science research.

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