Editor's Note

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Jim Atkins: Technology, training & transition

Editor's Note: *This editorial column is part of ongoing profiles of* TJ*'s editorial board members. TAPPI thanks these volunteer board members for their hard work and willingness to share their expertise with the forest products community.*
– **Monica Shaw**, Editorial Director

As a young research chemist at International Paper in 1975, *TAPPI Journal* (*TJ*) editorial board member Jim Atkins received some valuable guidance from his manager, Jim Luce. Luce advised that if Jim wanted to be a paper scientist, he needed to join TAPPI. That decision, says Jim, surely did pay off.

"Companies have come and gone in my career, but TAPPI has always been there," Jim describes. "On the surface, TAPPI is a repository for the technical information that has been essential to my career. But even more importantly, my technical network, and a good part of my social one, has come from my associations in TAPPI."



Jim Atkins inspecting a Eucalyptus forest in Brazil.

During his career, Jim has worked in production, engineering, and mill management for several paper companies, including International Paper and James River (now Georgia-Pacific). For the last twenty years, he has been a technical consultant for his own company, Atkins Inc., where he works with a broad diversity of global clients. Named a TAPPI Fellow in 1987 for technical contributions to the industry, Jim has been a *TJ* editorial board member for more than 10 years.

"The *TJ* Board has historically been populated by great people who really care about the intellectual property of the paper industry," Jim says. "My association with such dedicated folks has always shown me what a great resource we have in the Journal."

An author of more than 35 technical papers, Jim holds a degree in Chemistry from the University of North Carolina. His areas of expertise include papermaking technology, technical training, grade development, project management, and process engineering. Jim currently resides in New Jersey and is a native of Mobile, AL.

TAPPI activities & training

In addition to being a TAPPI Fellow and *TJ* editorial board member, Jim has held a number of offices in the Paper and Board Division and was awarded its Technical Award and Leadership and Service Award. He also served on the TAPPI Board of Directors from 1988-1990.

Along with his consulting work for paper companies around the world, Jim teaches a number of papermaking courses for TAPPI. "The most fun courses are the ones I teach operators in paper mills," he notes. "They really appreciate what you tell them."

He has produced two computer-based training courses for TAPPI – "Making Pulp and Paper" and "Practical Papermaking," both of which are available from TAPPI Press. His general advice to young engineers comes from Jim Luce: Take your work very seriously, but don't do the same about yourself.

An industry in transition

Since joining *TJ*'s editorial board, Jim has witnessed many major industry changes, the most significant of which he characterizes as the digital revolution and the shift in technology and production capacity from North America to China. "Few would have guessed ten years ago that China would be the world leader in paper production," he says.

As far as the industry's challenges and opportunities, Jim remains concerned at the lack of fundamental research in North America, which he views as "unfortunate, since we stand at a cusp in the history of our industry. You can continue to make buggy whips or you can embrace the opportunities that change offers."

"Cloud computing will have a major effect on information transfer and storage, which will impact many paper grades," Jim continues. "And the role smart phones will play? It's clear that our products need to have different functionality in the future. The opportunity resides in deciding what role our industry will have in that future." **TJ**

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