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PEERS Conference Awards Committee



TAPPI Journal showcases the best of PEERS 2012

As we are all aware, there has been near constant, one might say relentless, change in the paper industry throughout the last decade. There have been significant declines in newspaper and magazine advertising and readership, intense international competition in white and coated papers, and a huge change in the perceived value of research, forest ownership, and even maintenance.

The TAPPI Pulping and Engineering Conferences have not been immune to these changes. In the last decade, attendance at the Pulping Conference declined from nearly 1000 to several hundred. The Engineering Conference suffered similarly. TAPPI responded by combining conferences and today, Pulping and Engineering are combined with Environmental, Recycle, and a relatively new word – Sustainability – to provide the five letters of the PEERS conference acronym. The merger of technical areas created some issues and concerns that the Joint Divisions Council has worked diligently to manage.

Today, the PEERS conference is a stable fixture in the TAPPI calendar, and on its way to running like a well-oiled machine. One remaining challenge is the difficulty of selecting a conference best paper from among so many disparate disciplines and specialty technologies. For the last three years, it has been nearly impossible for the PEERS Conference Awards Committee to settle on a single, consensus best paper. In an effort to address this issue, the Awards Committee has done what TAPPI has learned to do – change.

New awards selection process yields *TJ* special issue

As a new selection process, the Awards Committee receives candidate best papers from all the conference committees that are responsible for the technical sessions of the conference. These candidate papers are then sent out for peer review. The reviewers are asked to perform a standard review as they would for *TAPPI Journal* (*TJ*) or another peer reviewed journal. The committee also requests approximately one page of commentary, and in particular, for the reviewers to focus on what was really good about the paper, and what was not good. The PEERS Conference Awards Committee then sorts through the papers and the reviews, with the expectation that a consensus best paper will emerge.



Brian N. Brogdon and Peter W. Hart, *TJ* editorial board members and organizers of this special issue.

As part of the new awards selection process, we selected some of the best papers delivered at the 2012 PEERS Conference to appear in a special issue of *TJ*. We provided Dr. Peter W. Hart and Dr. Brian N. Brogdon, members of the *TJ* editorial board and organizers of this special issue, with the peer reviews needed to assist the Awards Committee's final decision. We were able to hand them a nearly complete package of papers – basically everything they needed, except the re-writes to address the reviewer comments. There are two goals for the new process. Goal one is in front of you – a special issue of *TAPPI Journal* to recognize and honor the finalists for the 2012 PEERS High Impact Award. Goal two is the announcement of the 2012 PEERS High Impact Award winner at the 2013 PEERS Conference on Monday, September 16, in Green Bay, WI.

PEERS High Impact Award

As the PEERS Conference Awards Committee Chair, and with the honor of writing the guest editorial, I would like to congratulate the four award winners from the 2012 PEERS Conference who are finalists for the 2012 PEERS High Impact Award:

- Ricardo Santos of North Carolina State University and today MeadWestvaco Corporation. Ricardo delivered the paper titled "Impact of hardwood species chemical structures upon lignin and carbohydrate degradation," selected as the best paper in the Pulping and Bleaching Committee sessions.
- R. Daniel Haynes of AkzoNobel Pulp and Performance Chemicals. Danny delivered the paper titled "Colloidal organic content and tackiness of coated broke and