



Gerry Ring: The potential in paper processing

***Editor's Note:** This month, we continue our series of columns profiling the background and expertise of TJ's editorial board members. These volunteer members spend long hours overseeing the peer review process and contributing to TJ. TAPPI would like to express its gratitude to the editorial board members for their hard work and willingness to share their expertise with the forest products community.*

– Monica Shaw, Editorial Director

TAPPI and the *TAPPI JOURNAL* (TJ) editorial staff would like to welcome one of the newest members of the TJ editorial board, Dr. Gerard (Gerry) J.F. Ring, emeritus professor of Paper Science and Engineering at the University of Wisconsin—Stevens Point (UWSP) and technical consultant to the Wisconsin Institute of Sustainable Technology. In 2013, Gerry retired after 27 years with UWSP and now joins the TJ editorial board as a papermaking expert. A member of TAPPI since 1981, he has served on numerous committees and subcommittees and is also a former TAPPI Board of Directors member and past Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer for the Lake States local section.

Gerry was born in Glasgow, Scotland, and immigrated in the late 1950s to the United States, where he resided in Albany, New York, until 1976. While pursuing his B.S. in Chemistry and Biology from the State University of New York at Albany and his M.S. in Paper Science and Engineering from the Institute of Paper Chemistry (IPC) in Appleton, WI, Gerry worked as a project engineer for Westvaco Corporation for a summer and as a research chemist at International Paper in subsequent summers.

After earning his Ph.D. in 1980 from IPC with a dissertation on “The molecular weight distribution of bacterial cellulose as a function of synthesis time,” he became a research scientist with Kimberly-



Dr. Gerard (Gerry) J.F. Ring joins the TAPPI JOURNAL editorial board as a papermaking expert.

Clark Corporation for six years, after which he joined UWSP as a professor. In 2003, he became Chair of UWSP's Paper Science and Engineering Department, and in 2009, he assumed the position of director of the Education Division for the Wisconsin Institute of Sustainable Technology.

Gerry has authored or co-authored nearly 20 scientific papers, one of which won the 2011 TJ Best Research Paper Award (*TAPPI J.* 10[11]: 9[2011]) on the “The hyperbolic theory of light scattering, tensile strength, and density in paper.” Gerry also holds four patents. In his role on the TJ editorial board, he looks forward to building extra papermaking content and increasing TJ's impact as a scientific journal.

Additional TAPPI involvement

Along with the previously mentioned activities with TAPPI, Gerry was named a TAPPI Fellow in 2008. His technical committee and subcommittee involvement has included paper physics, papermaking additives, and sizing and functional surface additives. In his many years as a member, he has appreciated the opportunities the Association has provided to broaden his professional and geographical horizons.

“TAPPI has always given me the sense that I am a professional papermaker, scientist and engineer, as it has provided me the ability to experience the techni-

cal breadth of the industry,” Gerry said. “I once only considered myself a pulping technologist. But, now through conferences, *TJ*, *Paper 360*, and TAPPI courses, I feel that I can function as a broad-range specialist who is able to develop pulping processes, improve paper production, and develop paper products. Also, given its scope, TAPPI has made me feel that I have a national and international identity.”

Technical and industry perspectives

Since joining the industry in the 1970s, Gerry considers the greatest changes in the research environment to have stemmed from application of sophisticated online measurement and scanning techniques. As for technological developments during that time, he feels the most impressive ones have centered on the paper machine.

“The development of the hydraulic headbox, the dilution headbox, and the gap former are among the most significant advances,” said Gerry. “These developments have reduced the size of fiber flocs flowing onto the wire and enabled paper machines to produce superior formation, resulting in narrower product specifications and higher sheet quality. Other significant technologies include extended nip pressing and soft nip calendering.”

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With regard to challenges in the research environment, the paper industry may be its own worst enemy, according to Gerry, who sees industry’s potential in terms of a deeper grasp on papermaking.

“When you look at emphasis given to research during the 1970s versus now, the industry unfortunately appears to believe it is no longer important, as research has been reduced to almost insignificant levels,” Gerry described. “This is one reason I worked to create the Wisconsin Institute of Sustainable Technology as an attempt to reverse this tendency.



Gerry with his wife Mary and their Labrador retriever Hamish.

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On a personal note

Gerry resides in Custer, WI, with his wife Mary and his Labrador retriever Hamish, who is named for a fictional detective. Retirement has provided more time for his favorite hobby of golfing, which he found was a “virtual requirement” of being active in Lake States TAPPI, where many golf outings were associated with meetings.

In addition, Gerry has been able to resume his hobby of model trains, which were kept in boxes through his teaching years. He is now an active member of the Waupaca Area Model Railroaders. **TJ**