

Conference Report

Pulp and paper executives and academics discuss industry's needs at TAPPI/API research conference

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The 1991 TAPPI/API Conference on Paper Industry Research Challenges was held in Baton Rouge, LA, on Oct. 10-12, 1991. For a second year, the conference connected approximately 25 researchers from U.S. universities not currently engaged in pulp and paper industry research with an equal number of industry research executives. Through forums and personal discussions, those in the pulp and paper industry communicated the basics of pulp and paper technology with emphasis on current and future industry needs. The intent is to stimulate interest on the part of university research people to address some of those needs.

Donald M. Gilmore, TAPPI's director of technical services, opened the conference on Thursday evening by welcoming attendees and introducing Gary A. Baum, director of corporate research and development at James River Corp.'s Neenah Technical Center and chairman of TAPPI's Research Committee.

Baum talked about the research needs of the industry. The pulp and paper industry faces many challenges, he emphasized, that will require the ingenuity and fundamental approach characteristic of university research.

Conference combines discussions with tour

On Friday, participants received an overview of the pulp and papermaking processes from Michael J. Kocurek, director of the Herty Foundation. Norman Liebergott, senior scientist at the Pulp and Paper Research Institute of Canada, followed Kocurek, focusing on pulping and bleaching technology. Dan W. Manson, senior consultant for James River Corp., provided information on the papermaking process.

The afternoon was taken up with a tour of Georgia Pacific's fine paper mill at Port Hudson, LA. For some of the university professors, this was their first time inside a paper mill. Many commented that the tour made the business of making paper more real and brought some of the research needs into better focus.

At the evening banquet, Ronald J. Slinn, vice president of the American Paper Institute, talked about some of the factors driving industry "needs." He cited growing environ-

mental pressures, despite the industry's exemplary response to various environmental issues through the years.

Baum was first on the Saturday morning program with an in-depth presentation about paper structure. Afterward, participants divided into three groups to attend concurrent technical sessions on:

- Measurement and control, chaired by Louis S. Adler, manager of process control systems for ABB Process Automation in Columbus, OH
- Recycled fiber, chaired by Theodore H. Wegner, assistant director for pulp, paper, and composites research at the USDA Forest Service, Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, WI
- Biotechnology and environmental issues, chaired by Karl-Erik L. Eriksson, professor of biochemistry and eminent scholar of biotechnology for the Department of Biochemistry at the University of Georgia in Athens, GA.

In these breakout sessions, the speakers emphasized the current status of the technology in their respective areas of expertise and stressed the need for increased research. There were good exchanges of views between the academic guests and session participants on possible approaches to some of the challenges presented. It was obvious that the academic guests were warming to these topics.

Eriksson expressed his interest in joining forces with pulp and paper companies for further development of new commercial pulping and bleaching processes using enzymes. Peter Felker, project leader at the Center for Semi-Arid Forest Resources and research scientist at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&I University, stated his interest in industry research. He indicated that he would like to determine the pulping potential of some fast-growing species as a source of hardwood pulp, and said that he would follow up with the Institute of Paper Science and Technology in Atlanta, GA, and eventually with a paper company. Many others expressed an interest in following up in some manner with the contacts they made during the conference.

**Closset is also second vice chairman of the Research Management Committee of TAPPI's Research and Development Division.*

TAPPI Research Funding Program

Following the breakout sessions, Alfred H. Nissan, retired vice president of research at Westvaco Corp., spoke about the TAPPI Foundation Research Funding Program. Nissan is now a consultant to Westvaco and an adjunct professor at the State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, NY. He also serves as chairman of the Research Funding Committee of TAPPI's Research and Development Division.

In his opening comments, Nissan explained that in addition to this conference, TAPPI is outreaching to academia by funding research grants to colleges, universities, and other research organizations. As of October 1991, TAPPI had received 17 proposals for funding consideration. These proposals are reviewed by the Research Funding Committee on their value as precompetitive research for the industry. Pro-

posals accepted by the committee will be recommended to the TAPPI Foundation—a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization established in 1990 for charitable, educational, and scientific purposes—for funding approval. Deadlines for receipt of proposals are December 31 and June 30 of each year.

Further information on the TAPPI Research Funding Program can be obtained from Donald M. Gilmore, TAPPI's director of technical services, telephone: (404) 446-1400, ext. 223, or Karen Murray, TAPPI technical divisions administrative assistant at ext. 211. The fax number is (404) 446-6947.

For further reading on research needs in the pulp and paper industry, a monograph summarizing the findings of the National Science Foundation workshop held in 1988 at the University of Maine, entitled *Research Needs in the Pulp and Paper and Related Industries*, is available from TAPPI PRESS. □