

TAPPI/API Conference addresses paper industry research challenges

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Fifty top academic and industrial researchers met recently to discuss potential research opportunities in the pulp and paper industry. The forum that brought them together, the 1992 TAPPI/API Conference on Paper Industry Research Challenges, was held Oct. 14–16, 1992 in Green Bay, WI. These joint annual conferences provide opportunities for leading pulp and paper industry researchers to explain the industry's present technology and perceived needs to young professors.

A mill tour was scheduled to give a better understanding of actual industrial practice. Structured breakout sessions were organized for academic and industrial researchers to discuss individual interests one-on-one.

After Donald M. Gilmore, TAPPI's director of technical services, introduced the group to TAPPI's various activities, Gerard P. Closset, vice president-technology, Champion International Corp., outlined areas where fundamental academic research could develop a new basis for resolving difficult industrial challenges.

Gary A. Baum, director of corporate research and development, James River Corp., discussed academic "seed money" funding opportunities through the Research Funding Program of the TAPPI Foundation.

On the second day of the conference several topics were presented. Larry Graham, chairman, Paper Science and Engi-

neering Department, University of Wisconsin, provided an overview of the pulp and paper industry. Norman Liebergott, formerly a senior consultant at PAPRICAN and now a private consultant, talked about pulping and bleaching. Dan W. Manson, formerly a senior consultant of James River Corp. and now a private consultant, outlined the papermaking process.

Thursday afternoon, the tour of Champion International's Quinnesec, MI, paper mill provided a concrete illustration of papermaking technology for the academic guests. Mill hosts included Bill Stephenson, process control manager, and Mike Carroll, Lance Doenier, Tim Galliford, John Kelm, Kathy Kulas, Brian La Brash, Mark Springer, and George Vorakahl, plant staff members. Sue Lucas and Pam Nelson made the tour arrangements.

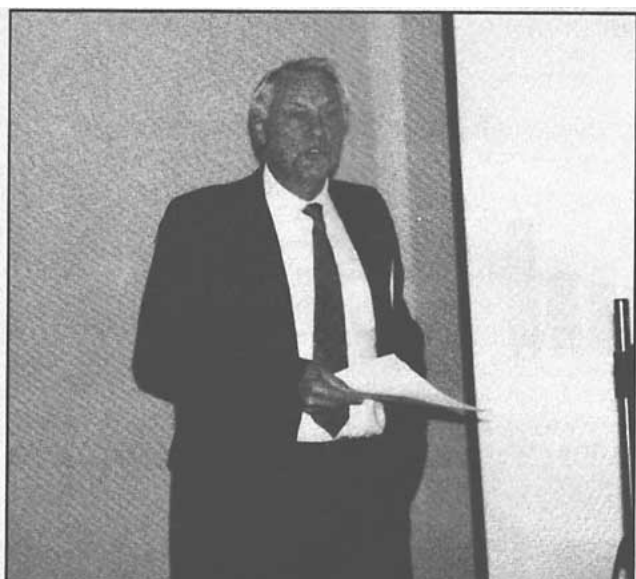
After returning to Green Bay, Ronald J. Slinn, vice president, pulp, materials and technology of American Paper Institute (API), provided an industry perspective at the evening banquet.

The following day, after Baum's comprehensive discussion of paper as an engineered product, participants divided into five breakout sessions: Clyde Van Haren, consultant with James River Corp., led the session on measurement and control; Theodore H. Wegner, assistant director—pulp, paper and composites research, USDA Forest Products Laboratory, led the session on fiber supply; Karl-Erik L. Eriksson, Department of

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Conference Report

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Biochemistry, University of Georgia, led the session on biotechnology and environmental technology; Norman Liebergott led the session on pulping and bleaching processes; and Nick G. Triantafillopoulos, senior research associate, Gencorp Polymer Products, led the session on surface science.

The breakout sessions permitted an overview of these topics. Detailed discussions of structuring fundamental research provided a basis for addressing pressing industrial needs.

In the past three years, TAPPI's Board of Directors has placed

Karl-Erik L. Eriksson led a breakout session on biotechnology and environmental issues.



an emphasis on research. TAPPI formed a board-level committee in 1989 to define TAPPI's research mission. The committee sought ways to increase the ability of the domestic pulp and paper industry to compete in the global economy of the 21st century.

The committee decided to develop ways to interest researchers from top institutions to address research needs in the pulp and paper industry. Young professors were specifically targeted because the current federal research support system tends to reward academics for extending work in a given area. Thus, successful early work will tend to set the pattern for an academic career.

Many academic guests have said that before the conference they generally had little knowledge of the pulp and paper industry but knew that the industry was under environmental attack. They perceived the industry to be slow to change and generally relying on experience or *art*. They were unaware of the many technological problems facing the industry and were uncertain of the industry interest in research and development.

After the conference, these academic guests reported that their perceptions had changed. Most felt that the pulp and paper industry faced many complex and challenging problems and was open to new ideas.

Researchers who attended felt that, contrary to popular perception, the industry was concerned about the environment. Most academic participants felt that some relationship existed between industry needs and traditional fields of research and expressed an interest in precompetitive pulp and paper research.

Planning for the 1993 TAPPI/American Forest and Paper Association Conference is now under way. **[E]**