

Sampling conferences galore—what do attendees take home?

Kim H. Esbensen, Editor

Spurred by an ever increasing number of sampling conferences on both hemispheres, at the recent Sampling 2014 the editor made a grab sampling of opinions targeting two major exhibiting companies and one academic dignitary. To the extent that no grab sample can ever be representative, *TOS forum's* readers are encouraged to complement with individual comments, reflected views and further opinions...

Sampling 2014—What does academia get from Sampling and WCSB conference(s)?

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The attraction of the “Sampling” conferences for academia lies principally in the opportunity it provides to remain in the flow of what is happening in the world of the “sampling” fraternity. The last conference theme, “Sampling—Where it all begins” was, as with other events organised by the AusIMM and CSIRO, to the point and catchy.

Assessments

Conferences organised and arranged by professional bodies, such as the AusIMM, naturally have their member's interests at heart and on seeing the call for papers one's immediate reaction is: Is the research I have done in the past year or two worth reporting to my peer group? The importance of a conference such as Sampling 2014 to the academic is that it is essential to remain involved by contributing meaningful research. Involvement in the annual round of conferences, including the World Conferences on Sampling and Blending (WCSB series) and the AusIMM-CSIRO sampling conference held every other year, is part of the routine for academics. Once you are in the loop, so to speak, and have presented at one conference, the immediate thought is: “What aspects of current research should be covered at the next conference” or “How can I extend my current area of research”. Attendance at the next conference requires commitment and dedication and they bring forth meaningful research that would otherwise remain unreported. A particular advantage of the sampling conferences is that the spectrum of research opportunities across the sampling, bed blending, statistical process control,

QA/QC and equipment development fields is wide.

The immediate reaction to an event such as we have enjoyed at Sampling 2014 is that it is very professionally run. The quality of the presentations demonstrates that presenters are dedicated to improving our understanding of all manner of sampling issues. In addition, the support and spread of international delegates demonstrates that people from most of the world (less South America) understand the importance of sampling to the quality and texture of the decisions that can be made when good sampling is undertaken. A very significant factor is that basic principles and the underlying probabilistic concept that “each and every fragment must have the same opportunity as every other fragment of being in the sample” is consistently kept at the forefront of all of the deliberations at sampling conferences. This, together with a number of other basic principles featured, is aimed at ensuring that good sampling practice and principles are carried out in the wider industry.

Apart from the round of friendly equipment suppliers who are always ready to explain the advantages and benefits of their particular brand of sampling equipment, the conference also becomes a showcase for

some very clever inventions. The importance of the basic theoretical principles being in place is that the leading manufacturers of sampling equipment have also engaged themselves with the process, and are keen to make sure that equipment they produce obeys and upholds these basic principles. The nature of the competitive market is such that different equipment manufacturers will have a sharp eye out for their neighbours' latest developments and advancements.

The academic world is said to live by the precept “publish or perish”. This may be true to some extent, but there are in fact a fair number of academics who publish because they really have something that is worth informing industry and the sampling fraternity about. The value of sitting for three days and listening to a very broad range of speakers is that it provides a rich bed of areas for *additional* research themes to one's own—particularly when the research is driven by curiosity. In addition, it provides an opportunity to earth one's ideas and concepts in the critical minds of those whose interests are mainly related to providing a service to industry and have to make a living around issues related to sampling. This means that by presenting (and publishing) ideas that arise in academia, whose principal concern

is to educate and investigate, one is pushed out of one's comfort zone into the rough and tumble of life where individual consultants are struggling to make a living, as are the companies involved a.o. The current setup of sampling conferences, in which one can find at least one every year (this may, or may not, be a little too much) is a vital melting pot for the entire sampling community, serving its needs well.

Conclusion

The role and importance of communications amongst those interested and committed to the sampling conferences, between conference events, cannot be over emphasised. In this regard the *TOS forum* serves a particularly important role as it provides a vehicle for contributions and notes that would not normally appear as a publication or in conference proceedings. In addition it provides a forum in which ideas



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can be debated and considered amongst members of the sampling community in a

manner that allows for differences of opinion to be aired and appreciated.