

Editorial

“Fifty six channels and nothing to watch” says a song of Freddie Mercury. A tune we may hear at academically dominated conferences could well read “hundreds of paper but nothing to apply”. Although engineering R&D is expected to benefit industrial practice in improving products and processes and thereby result in benefits to society that supports it, we often find that industry participants form a silent minority at engineering and technology conferences. Results of painstaking research done by academics thus finds to useful takers in industry. Academics are often blissfully unaware of real industrial problems so they “develop” virtual problems and obtain excellent solutions to them. Injection of more science may have the effect of moving further away from industry unless a conscious effort is made to simply the technology transfer process via dialog between academia and industry.

Thankfully, such was the case at IWSID2004 held in Mumbai, India during December 20-23, 2004. IWSID stands for International Workshop and Symposium on Industrial Drying. The first two days were part of the workshop with lectures presented by eminent experts from various parts of the world. The following two days consisted of conventional symposium of contributed technical papers in lecture and poster format. Two Plenary and seven Keynote lectures, also from various countries, gave it an IDS-like appearance. The big difference was, however, the audience. A majority of the audience came from industry- mainly food, dairy, chemical and pharmaceutical as well as vendors of drying equipment. The industrial boom in India was evident at this meeting.

It is hoped that future drying-oriented meetings will follow the lead of IWSID2004 and bring in industry to such events for whom the whole exercise is intended. Drying is not an academic problem per se. Academics can help solve industrial drying problems but they themselves will never apply what they have discovered.

The year 2005 will see a number of major conferences devoted to drying technologies in various parts of the world. The growing interest in drying R&D is encouraging. However, we need to bring in academia-industry interaction in a significant manner to make this activity sustainable at the current level.

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