

Editorial- R&D and Innovation

To serve R&D is the key to the purpose of existence of archival technical and scientific journals. Science journals and even engineering science journals frequently are designed to meet the needs of knowledge archival, dissemination and generation by and for academic researchers. This journal, *Drying Technology*, has the mandate to serve the academic as well as industrial scientists and engineers. Often, they have conflicting requirements. We attempt to bridge the gap between the academic research and industrial development including design. I believe this journal has successfully made latest research results from academic institutions to the industrial world spanning almost all industrial sectors.

Innovation, not renovation or novelty *per se*, is central to productive R&D, as I have repeatedly noted in my earlier editorials as well. Publications in this journal often present ideas, results and recommendations that can be translated to industrial practice. This can enhance productivity, product quality, operational safety as well as reduce energy consumption. Even a few percent enhancement in productivity can mean millions or even hundreds of millions of dollars worth savings to large industrial operations where thermal drying is a key unit operation. I am sure that this is happening on a global scale but the authors and certainly the editors are blissfully unaware of this enormous benefit industry and in turn the society derives from access to this journal. This “unmeasurable” impact, unfortunately, cannot be assessed by normal metrics used to evaluate archival journals. The number of citations attracted does not imply actual practical utilization of the ideas presented by authors. The purpose of engineering research ought not to be publications and citations but to what extent it benefits industry. This is different from the goals of research in science or arts.

Despite the duality of our journal’s objectives, I am pleased to report that we are doing very well even according to the academic metrics of impact factor, half life and number of citations our papers attract. Personally, I would like to see more industrial adoption of the ideas we present and make freely available to all in this proverbial “flat” world. Recent bumpy economic events around the globe are casting some doubt on the “flatness” of the globe, however. We will continue to serve the drying R&D community around the world. The continuing and even accelerating interest in drying R&D is reflected in the number and success of numerous major conferences devoted to drying. Indeed, 2009 can be aptly declared as the Year of Drying!

R&D means different things to different regions in different times. In weak economic times it often means Retrench & Downsize. What I would really like it to denote is innovation leading to Radical & Disruptive technologies. Of course, experience shows that industry adopts incremental enhancements to current technology more readily than it does radical technologies. Our journal covers both incremental and disruptive technologies; the former are more likely to succeed in the shorter timeframe while the latter are meant for longer timeframes.

To sum, *Drying Technology* attempts to serve both academia and industry in the short to medium as well as in the long term. We welcome industry participation to ensure we do continue to meet this objective.

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