

***BioResources* to Serve as Host for Fundamental Research Symposia Archives**

Martin A. Hubbe

The Fundamental Research Committee (FRC), founded in 1956 to organize regular symposia among pulp and paper scientists, has been aiming to widen access to their archival published proceedings. The FRC decided that it would be best to make their published work freely available on the web rather than continuing to offer CD versions for sale. They wanted to work together with an entity having experience with open access publishing. The FRC has selected *BioResources* as that entity, based on our 13-year record of open access service to the same branch of science and technology. *BioResources* is honored to take on this role and accordingly will henceforth prominently list the “Fundamental Research Symposia Archives” on our web page with links to the FRC content.

Keywords: Back issues; Peer-reviewed conference reports; Cellulosic fiber science; Meetings

Contact information: North Carolina State University, Department of Forest Biomaterials, Campus Box 8005, Raleigh, NC 27695-8005; e-mail: hubbe@ncsu.edu

My Experience with a Distinguished Legacy

In 1977, as I began my graduate degree studies at the Institute of Paper Chemistry (IPC) in Appleton, Wisconsin, I was a frequent visitor to the IPC library. Over the course of two years at IPC, I gradually became aware that some of the clearest and most insightful explanations about the nature of cellulosic pulps and paper products could reliably be found in a certain collection of books, each of which showed signs of heavy usage. Now that my affiliation is at North Carolina State University, and so much information is available online, I am a somewhat less frequent visitor to the university’s branch library nearest to my office. But one set of resources has continued to be a steady draw for me all these years – the same set of books that I had come to respect and depend upon while a Master’s Degree student back in the 1970s. The compiled volumes from the Fundamental Research Symposia continue to contain some of the clearest and most interesting discussions within our fields of study.

The World Has Gone Online

But most people are not as fortunate as I am to be located, once again, just two buildings away from a complete collection of all the FRC archives, dating back to 1957. That was the time period when scientific leaders within the pulp and paper industry began to have high-level conferences. These gatherings, alternating each four years between Cambridge and Oxford, UK, affectionately known as The Fundamental Research Symposia, were organized by the Fundamental Research Society’s Fundamental Research Committee. They have been regarded by many as the premier forum to publish one’s most important academic research work – assuming that it was of sufficiently high quality to be accepted by the conference organizers, after two rounds of rigorous peer review.

Getting Grounded in the Fundamentals

I think that a bold step was taken back in the 1950s when a group of scientists in the highly applied field of papermaking settled upon the word “fundamental” to define what has become a highly distinguished symposium series. The field is clearly not a basic science such as pure math or theoretical physics. The complex nature of papermaking technology, involving impure materials and multi-stage, interacting processes, continues to lead to a lot of uncertainty, not only in academic circles, but also on the production line. The term “fundamental” can be regarded as a reminder to periodically re-evaluate what aspects of the technology are firmly understood. By coming together on a regular basis, over a span of many years, participants in the symposia have been able to thresh out what they, as a group, were really sure of, as apart from other aspects that seemed in need of more study and conversation.

If one digs down into the soil, eventually one expects to encounter bedrock. Likewise, the FRC archives, now being made available online, will allow tomorrow’s researchers to trace some key concepts back to their earlier stages. Though some of today’s tools of research go well beyond what was available in earlier years since the 1950s, one has to respect the leadership and dedication of pioneers in our field. Well-selected citations of foundational work, in current research articles, can help give credit to some of the original sources of concepts. Also, by reading the transcripts of questions and answers, which follow each published chapter, one can get a sense of the manner in which definitions and concepts important in the field of papermaking science became refined and clarified over the course of time.

What to Expect

An open-access site, as readers of *BioResources* will understand, is something like a library, except that there is no return date on the contents that you check out for free. Though the FRC is making their back volumes freely available to the public, they will still hold the copy rights. For example, if someone wants to include a figure from an FRC archival article (or “chapter”), they will still have to ask the FRC for permission. And nobody, other than the FRC, will have the right to sell the contents or otherwise try to make money based on them.

To access the newly provided electronic versions of FRC content, visitors to the *BioResources* site will select “Fundamental Research Symposium Archives” from the feature field of the index page. The same link will also provide basic information about the FRC, about future conferences, and how to get involved with these. A distinctive feature of the Fundamental Research Symposia is that the discussion of papers is transcribed and published to provide a permanent record of this important aspect of scientific discourse. For each article in the archives, these discussions are included in the PDF; these often provide a fascinating insight into what was regarded as contentious or generally accepted at a given time. Like the journal *BioResources* itself, the FRC archives will continue to contribute to a scientific understanding of cellulosic materials and their application in various products.