

## **TRIBOLOGY 2008: POST MORTEM**

The 9<sup>th</sup> International Tribology Conference of the SAIT was an important event on the calendar of the SAIT and certainly also on the calendars of those interested in tribology.

It is always important to analyse the event and to confirm whether all expectations had been met – taking into account the fact that such a wide variety of expectations had to be met.

Firstly, the event was intended to attract speakers of international standing. The two plenary speakers, Prof John Williams from the University of Cambridge and Prof Thierry Blanchet from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, certainly paved the way for the 22 other speakers from abroad. This sets an all-time record for the number of overseas presenters. Papers by presenters from Botswana, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, India, Finland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, the UK and the USA, ensured a truly international representation, which was supplemented by local presenters.

Secondly, the event was intended to provide local presenters with an opportunity to report on their work. Of the local presentations, about half originated from South African universities and the rest from our industries. Although we could listen to only 8 papers from local industry, they were representative of our mining, automotive, power generation and lubricants industries, to name a few. The remaining 10 came from three of our universities – a sure sign that Tribology is not just a name, but rests on a solid foundation, slowly but surely growing just the way it was envisaged a long time ago by those pioneers of this exciting field of engineering. The organisers wish to extend their gratitude to each presenter who contributed to make this event a memorable one.

The third important element concerned delegates, where we achieved what we intended, namely to continue attracting more participants than the previous event. We again managed to increase the attendance, confirming that the SAIT is alive and well and that our local industry needs an event like this.

There was again excellent support from sponsors, both local and overseas. Whether the papers presented satisfied the needs of the delegates is a matter that the SAIT would like to receive feedback on. Clearly, the field of tribology encompasses much more than lubrication and wear.

Going through the proceedings, I am sure that even the most critical delegate would have to admit that a lot is to be learned from experts in their respective fields and that, although not necessarily spot-on, many presentations contained something for everybody to enhance our common interest towards understanding more about the intricacies of surfaces in relative motion.

Looking through the topics presented, materials-oriented tribologists as well as those with a tendency towards lubricants and lubricated surfaces had a wide choice. Tribology has now also moved into the fields of micromachines and biosystems, as several papers presented so aptly illustrated.

With a total of 42 papers presented over the three days of the conference, with parallel sessions in the afternoon, delegates had the opportunity to select those closest to their specific fields of interest.

Adding to this the opportunity to meet with delegates from all over the world, the real value of an international conference could be experienced: meeting and discussing matters of mutual interest.

The social events were also well-attended and contributed to this. The Speakers' Braai on Tuesday night at The Farm-Inn left our visitors with a lasting memory and provided the opportunity for the speakers to meet in an informal environment, introducing overseas visitors to typical South-African hospitality.

On Wednesday night, the cocktail party enabled participants, delegates and their spouses to meet under relaxed conditions in a beautiful environment on the campus of the University of Pretoria.

The Conference Banquet on Thursday night was not only enjoyable, but also gave us a lot of food for thought, with an appropriately inspiring talk by Peter Sullivan, Group Editor-in-Chief of Independent Newspapers.

During this event, the SAIT also presented its annual awards to the respective winners of each category:

- (i) Mr Johan de Koker, of the University of Johannesburg, who received the Louw Alberts Award for his life-long dedication to furthering Tribology as a discipline.
- (ii) Mr Deon Heymans, of Engen, who received the Best Technical Achievement Award.
- (iii) Mr Dave Ransom, of the Rubber Association of South Africa, for the Best Technical Presentation during the preceding year's technical programme.

Our two guests were taken to the Thornybush Game Park over the weekend after the conference. There is no question about their enthusiasm and awe when they came within touching distance of the King of the Jungle and could report back on close encounters with four of the "Big Five" – not bad going for a two-day excursion! This is the way to win friends for our beautiful country that has so much to offer. What better way to establish long-lasting relationships that may lead to research partnerships, exchange of research students, contacts with industry leading to solutions to pressing problems and the like?

Did you miss the event? Pity about that, but make sure to contact our Secretary – she might be able to supply you with a spare copy of the proceedings and you may want to submit an early registration for the next event. Presenters, let us have your ideas as soon as possible.

To those who presented, those who attended, those who worked hard to ensure a successful conference and those who sponsored the event, be assured that your support is sincerely appreciated. The organisers hope that your contributions will bear fruit.

Lastly, we should pay tribute to our Secretary Gill Fuller and her able assistant Isabel Bradley, who so diligently ensured that not a thing was left unattended – words cannot describe our thanks for your devotion to ensure yet another memorable, smooth-running conference.

Philip de Vaal  
Chairman: Tribology 2008

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