

Pittsburgh Conference: 1981

All previous records of numbers of papers presented, numbers of exhibitors, and numbers of attendees were broken at this year's Pittsburgh Conference on Analytical Chemistry and Applied Spectroscopy in Atlantic City, N.J., March 9-13. (See the accompanying table for comparisons with previous years.) The conference is outgrowing the convention facilities. Although it is likely that next year's meeting will again be in Atlantic City, conference officials are looking at other cities for the future.

Overall, the exhibition suggests that there are fewer instruments based on new measurement concepts and more instruments that have been upgraded to take advantage of microprocessor technology. There are instruments with self-diagnostics built-in and boxes of extra parts so that instrument owners can do their own troubleshooting and replace needed parts as they wear out or malfunction—at a fraction of the cost of calling a service person. There are prototypes of new instruments in the wings, while instrument companies assess the markets and develop the software.

Continuing education was the theme this year, and it was certainly appropriate. No matter what one's original purpose, the opportunities for learning were boundless. See page 703 A for Stu Borman's wrap-up of the Monday morning session, New Directions in Analytical Chemistry.

Centcom, Ltd., advertising management for American Chemical Society publications, held its third annual Pittsburgh Conference Breakfast March 10. The discussion centered on the future of the analytical instrument market, with Mary Good, vice-president and director of research at Universal Oil Products, as panel moderator. Top executives from Du Pont, Beckman, Perkin-Elmer, Hewlett-Packard, and Varian addressed the central issue and answered questions from persons in the audience, all of whom had a stake in the analytical instrument business.

Although the technological lead held by the U.S. is not as great as it once was, it is the general opinion that this lead still exists. Emphasis is

placed on maintaining it by investing in new technology and quality products. U.S. companies are expected to continue to be the major suppliers of analytical instruments worldwide. Predictions for growth centered on 8-10% real growth annually over the next five years. Louis Platt, general manager for analytical instruments at Hewlett-Packard, predicts new market growth in the Middle East, Asia, and South America.

A further shift from university markets to markets in the industrial sector is seen. The driving forces for analytical instrument use continue to be regulations, energy development, the environment, and increased industrial R&D. Predictions that biotechnology will forge ahead and that bioresearch from the private sector will provide new markets were made by Gerald F. Keahl, vice-president and manager of Beckman Scientific Instrument Division. Daniel Friel, director of analytical instruments and biomedical products at Du Pont, called attention to the current revolution in the life sciences. He also stressed the need for instrument developers to hang onto scientific principles, plan long-range for evolutionary advances, and meet the needs of users.

The impact of computers is really just beginning, according to Donal B. Duncan, president of the Varian Instrument Group. He also predicted

that the biological revolution now under way will have an overwhelming influence in the analytical instrument business. He sees analytical instruments as providing ever more powerful tools for chemists, but also stressed an expanded role for chemists themselves in the future.

In future developments, the role of software was emphasized as well as a commitment to meeting the needs of users and providing instrumentation that can be upgraded rather than scrapped as new developments take place. "Computer-aided chemistry," the slogan for Perkin-Elmer, describes that company's approach to automation, according to Horace McDonell, president and chief operating officer of Perkin-Elmer.

A central problem touched upon throughout the discussion was meeting the needs of the university. The cutback in funds from NSF for upgrading instrumentation at universities is only one aspect of the problem. The key issue is how to educate and train future chemists so they can use the instrumentation provided in the marketplace. Are there tax incentives that could be implemented to encourage industry to fund more university research? Are there innovative ways to update instrumentation at universities? There were many questions, but few answers.

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Table I. Pittsburgh Conference Statistics: 1981 vs. 1980

	1981	1980	Change, %
Total registration	17 270	16 032	+7.7
Conferees	13 139	12 426	+5.7
Exhibit only	4 000	3 606	+10.9
Press representatives	131	~100	~+31
Technical papers	~895	813	~+10.1
Exhibitors	485	458	+5.9
Booth spaces	1 199	1 056	+13.5
Seminar rooms	34	32	+6.2
Job openings	701	660+	~+6.2
Job candidates	568	490	+15.9
Interviews scheduled	1 683	—	—