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THE "PRACTICING" WOOD TECHNOLOGIST

The Executive Board has struggled, over the past several years, with ways to broaden the appeal of SWST to the "practicing" wood technologist. Similarly, the Editorial Board has tried to increase interest in *Wood and Fiber* among practicing wood technologists. Discussions often concern the various topics we feel would appeal to this hypothetical individual, but an adequate definition of the practicing wood technologist appears to be lacking. Recently, there has been additional discussion concerning training of wood technologists—these discussions have pointed out the variability of the field of wood technology (Schaffer, E. L. 1973, *Wood and Fiber* 4(3):125; Schroeder, H. A. 1973. *Wood and Fiber* 4(4):353).

I am concerned with what the "practicing" as opposed to the "theoretical" wood technologist requires from *Wood and Fiber* in the way of continuing education and mental stimulation so that he is more effective. I would like to suggest that the characteristics of a "practicing" wood technologist may depend largely on the viewpoint of the observer. Using this guideline, the person modeling cell walls is practicing wood technology just as much as the person assembling collections of these cell walls into particleboard.

Examine the subject areas listed in the request made in the News of the Profession section of this issue for slides to be used for student recruitment into wood science and technology curricula, noting especially those listed under "management." Are these subject areas really a part of wood technology? At first they may not appear to be, but upon reflection of what the overall ramifications of wood science and technology entail, I believe they must be.

If we accept that the cell wall modeler and particleboard maker are wood technologists, then are not also the business and research managers? What of the diverse tools available to wood technologists—how do they fit into the picture?

Both as individuals and collectively, we often fail to examine the fringes of our fields of interest, especially within our professional lives. I feel that the fringe interests of many wood technologists are also the mainstream interests of other wood technologists. For a professional wood technologist to be effective, he must be aware of the advances being made in the many fringe areas, while being at the same time at the forefront of the advances being made within his mainstream interest area.

The necessity for this fringe area awareness level becomes obvious when one considers the changes with time that have occurred in our employment duties, research interests, or technical enquiries. As we consider the changes in our own fringe interest areas, we become cognizant that we must accept, and indeed encourage, active communication within all aspects of wood technology. Only then can both our and our colleagues' interrelated mainstream and fringe interests be served.

All of these factors must be assessed when defining a "practicing" wood technologist. There is no single criterion that can be used, other than that he applies varying degrees of science and technology to wood. It is this large field of science and technology, as well as the wood itself, to which we must address ourselves.

R. W. MEYER
Editor