

Pittcon[®] 2007: The Evolution Continues

by Thomas Ricci

While still months away from Pittcon[®] 2007, planning for next year's Conference and Exposition, to be held February 25–March 2, 2007, at McCormick Place in Chicago, IL (*Figure 1*), is well underway. The Pittsburgh Conference hopes to capitalize on the success of last year's Conference and Exposition, where changes were implemented in the Technical Program and Exposition format designed to improve the Pittcon experience for both conferees and exhibitors. More modifications are slated for 2007 as the Pittsburgh Conference continues to evolve its program to address the needs of its constituents.

“Last year we made a concerted effort to solicit ideas from conferees and exhibitors on ways to improve the Conference, and at the same time, asked the Pittsburgh Conference Organizing Committee to seek opportunities to make changes within their committees that will help strengthen the Technical Program and Exposition,” said Beth Kirol, President of Pittcon 2007 (see *Figure 2*). “As a result, we implemented a number of format changes that I believe signifi-

cantly improved our scientific education program and expanded opportunities for technical discussions between conferees and exhibitors.”

Joe Plurad, North America Group Manager—Marketing Communications for **Millipore Corp.** (Billerica, MA) and member of the Pittcon Exhibitor Advisory Council for Marketing, commented, “Pittcon frequently solicits feedback from its attendees and exhibitors to translate the current market demands and how they may evolve in the future into a more productive and relevant conference experience.”

In 2006, the Pittcon Technical Program opened on Sunday afternoon with a number of symposia and oral presentations, capped by a plenary lecture, poster session, and mixer in the evening. Hours for the Technical Program were also adjusted to give more time for conferees to meet with exhibitors and initiate technical discussions and product demonstrations. In total, conferees were offered over 2300 technical presentations.



Figure 2 Beth Kirol, Pittcon 2007 President.

Last year was further highlighted by several changes in the Exposition hall, where, for the first time, exhibitor-sponsored banners hung colorfully above the Exhibition floor. Many exhibitors took advantage of rule changes that allowed them to increase their social time with conferees by serving refreshments in their booths. Pittcon 2006 provided further opportunities for interaction between conferees and exhibitors by sponsoring social mixers on the Exhibition floor on Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. The availability of wireless Internet access throughout the convention center made external communication with work colleagues and family much easier for all attendees and exhibitors.

Great expectations for Pittcon 2007

In the past 10 years, the Pittsburgh Conference has held successful meetings in Orlando, New Orleans, Chicago, and Atlanta, moving from city to city based on availability of the exhibition centers in Pittcon's



Figure 1 McCormick Place, Chicago, IL—home of Pittcon 2007.

typical March time frame. Historically, Chicago has always been a successful venue for Pittcon, and organizers are anticipating an attendance boost for 2007.

“We haven’t held Pittcon in Chicago since 2004 and we are excited about our return in 2007,” said Kirol. “We receive tremendous support from companies in the local community and we hope to attract over 24,000 visitors. Our attendance goal represents a nearly 20% increase from Pittcon 2006.”

Pittcon 2007 Technical Program welcomes the ACS Division of Analytical Chemistry

For the first time, the Pittcon 2007 Technical Program will include invited symposia and contributed oral sessions sponsored by the ACS Division of Analytical Chemistry (DAC). The DAC, with more than 10,000 members, decided to copartner with Pittcon versus participating in the Spring 233rd ACS National Meeting and Exposition, which is scheduled for a few weeks after Pittcon and is held in Chicago as well.

“Hosting our technical program at Pittcon is a real benefit to our members, particularly those who are budget limited and find it difficult to attend both the ACS Spring Meeting and Pittcon in the same year,” said ACS–DAC chair-elect (2005–2006) Laurie Locascio of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (Gaithersburg, MD).¹ Melinda Stephens, Pittcon 2007 Program Chairman, added: “The co-sponsorship diversifies our Technical Program and will address a broader audience in both industry and academia. The co-sponsorship and co-location of programs is a convenient opportunity for Pittcon and ACS–DAC attendees to get the most value from their travel dollar and time. We are pleased they are joining us in 2007 and hope the partnership will continue in the future.”

The ACS symposia are just part of a broad Technical Program comprising more than 2300 presentations, includ-



Figure 3 The Pittcon 2007 Technical Program features a host of educational opportunities, including invited symposia, workshops, poster presentations, short courses, and oral presentations.

ing invited symposia, oral presentations, short courses, workshops, and poster sessions. Topics include the latest advances in mass spectrometry, chromatography, bioanalytical techniques, environmental science and technology, food chemistry, nanotechnology, and a host of other instrumental techniques and applications (see *Figure 3*).

The annual Award Symposia will be highlighted by a number of scientific pioneers from academia, industry, and government, who will present their groundbreaking research. Included in the Award Symposia is Prof. Norman Dovichi, Ph.D., who will discuss his novel work in capillary array electrophoresis with laser-induced fluorescence detection in support of the Human Genome Project. Michael Natan, Ph.D, and Jonathan Sweedler, Ph.D., who will receive the Pittsburgh Analytical Chemistry Award, will present new findings in their research in metabolomics. Prof. Sweedler is being recognized for the number and depth of his contributions in the areas of analytical neurochemistry, including methods for assaying complex microenvironments.

The Short Course program continues to be a major educational component of the Technical Program. At Pittcon 2006, conferee registration for half- and full-day sessions grew by 20%. Courses are geared to all levels of students, from beginner to advanced, and cover a variety of topics, including chromatography, mass spectrometry, hyphenated techniques, validation, and statistics. Included in the program for Pittcon 2007 are a number of new courses, including “Real-Time PCR

Expression Profiling”; “Process Analytical Technology (PAT) Highlights”; “Perspectives, Global Initiatives and Applications”; “Risk Based Validation of Computerized Analytical Systems”; and advanced Excel courses on “Least Squares Analysis and Error Propagation” and “Writing Macros to Make Excel Even More Powerful.”

The Technical Program will open again on Sunday afternoon, with an afternoon schedule of symposia, oral sessions, and workshops, capped by a plenary lecture by Dr. Charles M. Lieber, the Mark Hyman Professor of Chemistry at Harvard University (Cambridge, MA), on “Nanowire Nanoelectronic Devices for Detection of and Interfacing to Biological Systems.” The first evening will conclude with a poster session in conjunction with a social mixer, which is always a very popular event.

Conferee networking meetings expand opportunities for technical discussions

As an added service for conferees, the Pittsburgh Conference is organizing conferee networking meetings for Pittcon 2007. These meetings will be moderated by an expert in the field and will provide conferees with the opportunity for in-depth discussion with their colleagues on topics of mutual interest during the Conference week. The Pittsburgh Conference is currently polling conferees for topics of most interest, and will announce the schedule and meeting topics later in 2006. Conferees can register for the meetings on the Pittcon 2007 Web site (www.pittcon.org).

Exposition changes geared toward encouraging more interaction

Pittcon 2007 conferees can once again expect a vibrant Exposition, with laboratory product vendors displaying their latest and greatest scientific instrumentation and labware (see *Figure 4*). While the Pittsburgh Conference expects to host a similar number of exhibitors and booths as in 2006, they have taken steps to make the Exposition floor a bit more compact to address a common complaint of its conferees—too much walking and area to cover. One conferee, who wore a pedometer on his ankle during the course of the week in 2006, said he had logged nearly nine miles in walking the entire Exposition floor.

In 2007, the registration area will be located in the Exhibition hall. The Pittsburgh Conference has also moved the poster session area into the center of the Exhibition hall for the first time, which they hope will give conferees more time to view posters as well as visit exhibitors. “In designing the Exposition floor layout, our goal was to create an environment that will encourage interaction and enable conferees to gain the most educational value from their visit, whether it be to attend the Technical Program, visit with exhibitors, or both,” said Resa Stauffer, Pittcon 2007 Exposition Chairman. “We believe that moving the posters onto the Exposition floor in a central location will serve both purposes.”

Conferees can also rely on a tram to navigate around the Exposition hall and will be able to find exhibitors grouped together within application-specific neighborhoods, including life sciences, laboratory informatics, and a new exhibitor area where first-time Pittcon exhibitors can easily be identified.

Once again, conferees will be able to take a moment to catch their breath at many rest stops, take advantage of wireless Internet access in public areas outside the Exposition hall, and enjoy complementary refreshments during several mixers in expanded locations throughout the Exposition hall.

Communication exchange key to success

In gearing up for Pittcon 2007, the Pittsburgh Conference has continued its two-way dialogue with conferees and exhibitors to ensure all needs are met. Utilizing a variety of research and feedback mechanisms, the Pittsburgh Conference has stayed in touch with attendee and exhibitor expectations and reorganized itself to more readily implement changes for the improvement of the Conference.

Information gathered from conferee surveys during and after Pittcon continues to provide valuable feedback, enabling the Pittsburgh Conference to emphasize topics of most interest in the Technical Program. As always, conferees say they continue to find enormous value in the opportunity to visit all of the vendors and technical representatives in one place to learn more about the vast array of instrumentation and products on display in the Exposition.

“We go to Pittcon mainly to evaluate new analytical techniques and instruments for future purchase. Pittcon is the most interesting trade show that I go to,” said Robert Emblidge, Ph.D., Sunoco Chemicals, Research & Technology, Central Development Laboratory (Philadelphia, PA).

In 2006, the Pittcon Exhibitor Advisory Council for Marketing (EACFM) was formed to work with the Pittsburgh Conference to enhance its marketing efforts and represent all exhibitors in addressing challenges and capitalizing on opportunities for improvement. “The EACFM has been a great sounding board for our plans and programs, and they have provided valuable feedback and original ideas to enhance our marketing efforts,” said Joanne Smith, Chairman of the Pittsburgh Conference Strategic Marketing Committee. “The EACFM has given the vendors a stronger voice in the future of Pittcon. It gives us a chance to use our experience gained while talking with our customers on the floor at Pittcon and our experience working with our cus-



Figure 4 Exposition floor at Pittcon 2006, Orlando, FL.

tomers throughout the year to help make Pittcon more valuable for scientists in their learning and buying processes,” said Mike Cuddyre, Americas Sales Development Manager for **Agilent Technologies** (Wilmington, DE), and EACFM member.

Wes Rawlins, Worldwide Marketing Communications Manager for **Dionex** (Sunnyvale, CA), added, “Pittcon has always been such an important show for **Dionex** that I was very pleased when I was asked to be a part of the Pittcon Exhibitor Advisory Council for Marketing. I think the broad representation of exhibitors on the council helped to improve the 2006 show, and I think it will have even more of an impact for Pittcon 2007.”

Exhibitor-friendly venue

At the Pittcon 2007 exhibitors’ meeting, held June 8 and 9 at McCormick Place in Chicago, exhibiting company representatives were greeted by a panel of union managers and representatives whose organizations are responsible for exhibitor setup and dismantle. Over the years, the Pittsburgh Conference has worked closely with the McCormick Place staff so that exhibitors can work in the most cost-effective manner within the rules and guidelines set forth by the convention hall unions. This partnership continues to grow as planning proceeds for Pittcon 2007.



Figure 5 New interactive Pittcon Web site—www.pittcon.org.

During the lively panel discussion at the exhibitors' meeting, union representatives explained a number of recent work rule changes represented in a new contract with the ironworkers (riggers) that are geared toward cutting exhibitor setup and dismantle costs and making it much easier for exhibitors to work within the guidelines. "With substantial support of enlightened labor leaders and continued labor reform, McCormick Place remains a venue where Pittcon can flourish," said Mark Tester, Senior Director of Sales and Marketing, McCormick Place.

Pat Allen, Senior Director of Focus One, the organization that provides the utility services for McCormick Place, also unveiled its new "\$mart Value Pricing" program for exhibitors. According to Allen, "The unique program combines the cost of Focus One utility services, estimated labor

required to install, set up, and remove those services, and any additional equipment into one guaranteed price. Focus One will guarantee the price quote based on information provided, which should help exhibitors to improve their cost management."

New Pittcon Web site improves communication

The Pittsburgh Conference also introduced its new Web site at the exhibitors' meeting in June (see Figure 5). In addition to a new modern design, the Web site offers improved navigation and will allow conferees and exhibitors to more readily find information of interest, register to attend or exhibit, book travel and housing, and even build a personalized agenda to organize their Pittcon visit.

A new media center, geared toward the editorial community, provides easy access to Pittcon press releases, graphics, and statistics of interest. Exhibitors can schedule press conferences and access a variety of marketing materials to promote their exhibition to customers.

Pittcon rolls out the welcome mat for midwestern visitors

In past years, Pittcon attendance was boosted by visitors from the heavy

concentration of pharmaceutical, food, environmental, contract laboratories, and other industry located in the Chicago area. In 2007, the Pittsburgh Conference is making it even more attractive for local companies to send their technical representatives and purchasing agents to Pittcon.

"We are planning to work with the major companies around Chicago and create incentives for them to bring more scientists and decision-makers to Pittcon, and are offering free registration on Thursday to encourage one-day visitors," said Kirol. "We are doing everything possible to bring the most people together at Pittcon to create a forum for interaction and the advancement of science, which has been our critical mission since the inception of Pittcon in 1950."

Reference

1. Mukhopadhyay, R. ACS Division of Analytical Chemistry teams up with Pittcon. *Anal. Chem.* **2006**, 78(13), 4243.

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