

AFT makes major contribution to UBC's new LC Refining Research Facility

Montreal, August 6, 2010. Power was first applied Monday to the new low-consistency (LC) refiner system donated to the Pulp and Paper Centre at the University of British Columbia (UBC) marking another milestone in the University's research program to enhance paper quality and reduce energy consumption.

It also marked a milestone in what has been described as one of the longest industry/academic partnerships at the university (over 25 years), according to James Olson, a Professor in the Mechanical Engineering Department at UBC and a member of the Advanced Papermaking Initiative.

Advanced Fiber Technologies (AFT) contributed the key process equipment to enable UBC to expand its capabilities in LC refining -- a technology that is now being exploited by the world's leading papermakers to "significantly improve the energy efficiency of mechanical pulp production" according to Olson.

"We are now starting up the most state-of-the-art, university-based LC Refining Facility in the world," Olson says. "We are grateful to AFT for helping us move into this important research area." Prior to the donation by AFT, the University had no industrial LC refining equipment. "We attempted to retrofit a high-consistency refiner to operate at LC, but this was unsuccessful," Olson says.

A member of the Aikawa Group, AFT designs and manufactures screening components and FINEBAR® refiner plates for the worldwide pulp and paper industry. To UBC, the company donated a state-of-the-art 16-inch Aikawa AWW single-disc LC refiner plus FINEBAR® refiner plates to process a full range of hardwood, softwood, and recycled fibers. The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) provided funding to purchase ancillary equipment and West Fraser Mills in British Columbia donated a 150 HP motor to drive the refiner.

"AFT has consistently contributed to R&D to fully understand the science of screening," says Dr. Robert Gooding, Vice President of Technology at AFT. "This most recent contribution underscores our commitment to LC refining research."

Gooding explains that while LC refining remains essential to a wide range of papermaking applications, it has taken on a new level of importance for mechanical pulping due to its reduced energy requirements. "AFT FINEBAR® has been at the forefront of low-consistency refiner plate technology so we wanted to be a part of this important project."

continues....





After a short “learning curve” to understand the complexities and nuances of the new facility, fundamental research and development will begin in earnest. The LC Refining Facility will allow UBC to test new ideas and concepts for pre-treatment, power reduction strategies, advanced controls, and the impact on paper surface qualities. “Of course, we will be eager to perform sponsored research for pulp product development to help the industry further improve its paper products,” Olson says.

Gooding added that AFT will also utilize the facility for fundamental research on plate geometries and power-gap relationships, as well as supporting customer trials.

Ends

For information, please contact:

Dr. Robert Gooding

Vice President, Technology
Advanced Fiber Technologies
T: +1 514 481 6111
E: robert.gooding@aikawagroup.com

Dr. James Olson

Professor
University of British Columbia
Pulp and Paper Centre
T: +1 604 822 5705
E: olson@mech.ubc.ca