

By Tamsyn Cox

News in Brief

A number of companies used Pittcon as a platform to address the press regarding recent acquisitions and start-up announcements and mark key anniversaries...

Pittcon 2010 recognised **Waters Corporation** for achieving a significant milestone as a 50-Year Pittcon exhibitor and for their continued commitment to Pittcon and the scientific community. A presentation plaque was made to Waters in the Pittcon press conference.

Agilent Technologies, Inc are in the process of their **Varian, Inc** acquisition, which will be the largest acquisition in Agilent's history, and Agilent used their press conference at Pittcon to provide more details to the press. The acquisition will broaden Agilent's product portfolio into atomic and molecular spectroscopy; establishes a leading position in NMR, imaging and vacuum technologies; and strengthens its consumables portfolio, while expanding their applications and solutions offerings in life sciences, environmental, and energy and materials. Agilent anticipates the acquisition of Varian to be complete by April 30, 2010, following the completion of regulatory reviews and clearances. Alongside this acquisition, Agilent announced a restructure of its business into two primary divisions: Chemical Analysis Group and Life Science Group (these divisions used to be a combined LSCA division) and a focus on customer service and the belief that the customer experience will drive the business forward.

Bruker Corporation and **Agilent Technologies, Inc** announced that Bruker and Agilent have entered into a definitive asset purchase agreement. Pursuant to this agreement, Bruker will acquire certain product lines of Varian Inc, which Agilent has committed to divest in connection with obtaining regulatory approval for Agilent's previously announced acquisition of Varian. The product lines to be acquired by Bruker include: Varian's global inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (ICP-MS) instruments business located in Melbourne, Australia; Varian's global laboratory gas chromatography (Lab GC) instruments business located in Middelburg, the Netherlands; and Varian's global gas chromatography triple-quadrupole mass spectrometry (GC-QQQ) instruments business located in Walnut Creek, Calif. The transaction is subject to customary closing conditions and regulatory approvals, and is expected to close shortly after Agilent completes its acquisition of Varian (discussed above)

SP Industries, Inc chose Pittcon 2010 for the global launch of its new company name – SP Scientific for its VirTis, Genevac, FTS Systems and Hotpack brands. Mark Shon, Vice President Sales and Marketing, commented: "Through a process of acquisitions over recent years we have created a strong corporate entity that develops, manufactures, sells and services a wide variety of innovative laboratory and process products to countries worldwide. The focal point of our worldwide business is scientific instruments including freeze dryers/lyophilizers, centrifugal evaporators and concentrators, environmental control chambers, thermal control system, glassware washers and dryers. Through our existing brands - Genevac, Virtis, Hotpack and FTS Systems - SP Scientific will continue its strategy of innovative product development, maintaining close consultative cooperation with its customers and offering international benchmark quality products, service and support."

The 61st Pittsburgh Conference & Expo took place at the Orange County Convention Centre, Orlando, Florida, between 28-5 March and International Labmate was there in full force to bring our readers the latest product launches from the show floor, the all important stats, hot topics of discussion and debate and award presentations. Plus our visits to exhibitors stands provided valuable feedback on show success (pages 28,29,30 and 32).

Pittcon prides itself on being the leading showcase for scientific and technical innovation offering an international platform for companies to exhibit their latest product and service offerings. It has a unique blend of networking sessions, educational programmes, media offerings and the chance for customers to meet suppliers face-to-face and experience hands-on product demonstrations. It promotes informal social networking with a variety of complimentary mixers on the expo floor and the opportunity for exhibitors to hold 'lunch & learn' sessions for guests. Pittcon emphasises recognising achievement with awards ranging from young investigator awards to the Pittcon Heritage Award and the conference donates nearly a million dollars each year in the form of science equipment grants, research grants, scholarships and internships for students, awards to teachers and professors, and grants to public science centres, libraries and museums.



TROUBLE AHEAD?

Some would say a pessimistic cloud hung over the build up of Pittcon this year: should Pittcon reside itself to being a sharper more B2B focussed bi-annual event to save diminishing numbers? An idea that some exhibitors were pushing for at last year's Pittcon and is reflected on our Exhibitors Comments page; does Orlando mean business Will the chosen host city be a rewarding one?; and considering 2010 is the turn of Analytica will this affect attendance? Especially considering the economic downturn is forcing companies to become more selective as to what exhibitions they attend and how frequently.

Pittcon 2010 President Annette S. Wilson addressed some of these issues in the Pittcon press conference, most notably confirming that Pittcon will remain an annual event.

A number of reasons were given for this decision: conferees purchase instruments every year and therefore an annual show is needed that enables purchasers to evaluate the various products and make their purchasing decisions productively; secondly, exhibitors each have a different product development cycle and it would be believed to be a disservice to those that had product launches in a year in which Pittcon was not held; and finally Pittcon is also attended as an educational experience and the annual opportunity to interact and network with scientists is vital. Exhibitors expressed mixed feelings on this and the success of Pittcon 2010 as a whole (see our Exhibitor Comments on pages 28,29,30 and 32).

As for location concerns there is a reported surge in life science research taking place in the Florida area, therefore supporting the choice of Orlando as host. Annette stated that Pittcon organisers increased their marketing efforts in Europe and marketed heavily in Florida to get attendance figures up. Furthermore, Richard T. Crotty, Orange County Mayor, made a number of key points in a recent report to prove that Orlando means business: it is a thriving business centre focused on high technology with a \$13.5 billion industry; it is home to the fifth largest university in the country with more than \$120 million in research grants; and it is home to one of only two 'medical cities' being built in the world. That being said, organisers acknowledged that attendance in Orlando can struggle and admitted that they are monitoring it.

WHAT THE FIGURES SAY...

There was an unmistakable drop in attendance at Pittcon 2010. Companies exhibit at Pittcon for a number of reasons: to generate sales enquiries; enhance corporate visibility; meet distributors; and build customer relations. However, despite 96% of 2009 exhibitors recommending Pittcon to other exhibitors, it seems these valuable reasons for attendance weren't enough for some. Exhibitors dropped below the 1,000 mark to 960 exhibitors occupying 2,005 booths (according to official Pittcon figures) – a decline from last year when 1,006 exhibitors occupied 2,249 booths in Chicago, and a further decline from 2008 in New Orleans when 1,110 exhibitors attended.



Overall registration fell just below the 20,000 mark in 2008 (19,018) and 2009 (19,000) and dropped dramatically to 16,876 this year, with 87 countries participating in the event. It should be noted however, that 2010 saw a 2% increase in conferees over Pittcon 2006, which was the last time the expo was held in Orlando. The number of poster sessions and short courses had healthy rising figures and media presence was slightly up with healthy press conference attendance as members of the press were keen to hear about new product launches and the various company acquisitions and business news (see *Pittcon News in Brief* on pages 26 & 27).

THE IMPORTANCE OF ROI...

Adding value and a healthy return on investment for exhibitors was absolutely key this year. Between 11am-2pm were exposition only hours. Technical programmes were arranged to allow for these three hours each day to attract more conferees to the exposition floor and increase booth traffic for exhibitors, without conferees risking missing important technical sessions.

The new Technology Park saw Pittcon attempting to take a more futuristic and high-tech stance. Within the 9,800 square foot area 24 large screen monitors displayed previews of select exhibitor product videos and services with benches strategically placed so that weary conferees could take a rest while being in view of the displays. The literature bins placed in the centre of the park offered complimentary industry related magazines and Scarab, a lunar rover developed by The Lunar Rover Initiative and supported by grants from NASA, NASA Johnson Space Centre, and NASA Glenn Research Centre was on display.

Poster sessions were also increased with displays in two areas on the floor - the Blue and Gray, to encourage more opportunities for exhibitor/conferee interactions.

The value offered to conferees for attending Pittcon was also high on the agenda. One of the biggest challenges facing Pittcon is the change in the way information is exchanged and the surge of online communication tools. One-on-one interaction is still important but the Internet means information can be accessed without the need to travel to an exhibition, therefore, Pittcon rose to the challenge and maximised its on-line capabilities.

Pittcon's online scientific community, Pittconnect.com, was launched as a way for participants around the world to interact and network with one another, more webcasts of symposia were made accessible, and there was increased publicity for exhibitors on the Pittcon website allowing more conferees to be reached prior to the show and will continue to facilitate scientific networking year round. New this year, conferees can also view 50 technical presentations via Webcast on the Pittcon website, available for viewing until May 7, 2010.

Enhanced educational opportunities were also addressed: international sessions to offer more diverse learning were available, presentations in different languages from leading scientists and government agencies were scheduled and conferee brochures were available in Portuguese and Spanish in an outreach to Latin America. The exposition floor was also given extra attention: despite key players such as Mettler Toledo still remaining absent, and Bruker taking to only attending Pittcon every odd year to promote their instruments, there were a reported 125 new exhibitors, one of which was awarded an *Editors' Choice Award* (see *Editors' Choice Award* on page 31) and a new French Pavilion. This area set aside on the exposition floor allowed the French scientific community to display their latest contributions and advancements in laboratory equipment and inform French exporters on commercial opportunities in the US market. This area was promoted by UbiFrance, the French Agency for International Business Development that is dedicated to the support of French companies in their efforts to export and detect foreign markets and Pittcon provided them with a channel to promote French laboratory science in America. The press conferences were a popular platform for companies to provide details of new acquisitions and such news was plentiful (see *Pittcon News in Brief* on pages 26 & 27). On the expo floor productivity and laboratory automation seemed to be a major theme this year with the instrumentation vendors. The trend for decreasing instrument size was evident as handheld X-ray and mass spectroscopy instruments were on show and more portable instrumentation for a variety of fields was a hot topic.



WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS...

The turn of AICHEM and Analytica may have taken a toll on 2009/2010 Pittcon figures and no doubt the economic downturn may still be causing adverse effects, but Pittcon has built a strong core community of scientists and exhibiting companies and has become a tradition for many vendors and conferees and therefore, maybe regardless of ups and downs, Pittcon could be with us for the foreseeable future. Atlanta plays host for Pittcon 2011 and given that it will be its first visit since 1997, it should provide an opportunity for new local companies and conferees to participate. Furthermore, given Atlanta's close proximity to major research centres, including Research Triangle Park and Oakridge National Lab, attendance for Pittcon 2011 could be promising. If attendance continues to struggle it could be a negative omen for Pittcon's future.

Pittcon 2011 will be held in Atlanta at the Georgia World Congress Centre, from March 12th-18th.

News in Brief

Buchi Corporation marked its 10-year anniversary in the North American market this year at Pittcon. In 2000 Buchi Analytical Inc was founded in the USA for distribution of the NIR product line and analytical products for the nutrition market. Since Buchi Corporation's founding the company has grown to become a leading North American provider of innovative, robust, and easy to use products and integrated solutions for customers in the Pharmaceutical, Environmental, Food & Beverage, Feed, and Academic markets. Hervé Lacombe, President BUCHI Corporation, said: "In ten years Buchi Corporation has evolved from a modest ten person supporting structure to a full sales and service organisation with forty people spread throughout the country from coast to coast. Our 20,000 square foot New Castle warehouse allows us to quickly deliver Buchi instruments and spare parts in both US and Canada."

Eksigent Technologies' liquid chromatography business has been acquired by **AB Sciex**. Among the technologies AB SCIEX has acquired are Eksigent's NanoLC-Ultra System for proteomics; the cHiPLC-nanoflex System for protein peptide separations; and the ExpressHT-Ultra HPLC System for LC/MS studies of pharmacokinetics and drug metabolism. Eksigent will continue to develop products under the Eksigent brand while also working with AB SCIEX to develop new products.

AB Sciex has launched as a new company as part of the **Applied Biosystems** and **MDS Analytical Technologies** joint venture. AB Sciex is dedicated to analytical and life science technologies and combines the two halves of the highly successful AB Sciex mass spectrometry joint venture into an integrated organisation. AB Sciex marked its debut at Pittcon by showcasing its portfolio of solutions for the mass spec market.

Thermo Fisher Scientific, Inc used its Pittcon conference to address the press personally concerning its announcement that it has signed a definitive agreement to acquire **Ahura Scientific**, a leader in field-deployed analytical instruments for human health and public safety, for \$145 million in cash plus the potential for an earn-out payment based on the achievement of certain 2010 financial targets. Ahura Scientific's products expand Thermo Fisher's portfolio of portable analytical devices designed to provide customers with the ability to rapidly identify and authenticate a range of molecular and elemental substances in the field. Based in Wilmington, Mass, Ahura Scientific has approximately 120 employees and generated full-year revenue of approximately \$45 million in 2009. Marc N. Casper, President and Chief Executive Officer of Thermo Fisher Scientific, said: "The acquisition of Ahura Scientific further enhances our position in handheld analysers and strengthens our Thermo Scientific brand by expanding the breadth of our portfolio with complementary technologies." The transaction is expected to close during the first quarter of 2010 and is subject to applicable regulatory approvals and a customary post-closing purchase price adjustment. Ahura Scientific will be integrated into Thermo Fisher's Analytical Technologies Segment.