

How NTC Evolved—A Brief History

In the early 1980s, SPE had 18 Divisions, each dealing with a specific area of plastics technology. Divisions were intended to be a permanent part of the Society's infrastructure, and establishing one required several years and 50 or more members. A means for more rapid survey was needed to keep up with the industry. Accordingly, at the fall Council meeting in 1984, the New Technology Committee was formed to explore "emerging areas of science and technology relating to plastics that have not received suitable Society attention...and shall devise and execute means to develop such areas."

In 1985, the first NTC chair, Lloyd Goettler, initiated teleconferencing—not a common procedure then—and assigned areas of technology to individual Committee members. He also scheduled teleconferences every four to six weeks. Progress was rapid; it became apparent that there were areas that warranted examination and people in the industry willing to take part in investigating them.

To assist these people, the Special Interest Group (SIG) was devised. Intended as a pioneering effort, a SIG required only a champion plus a nucleus of perhaps 10 members to start. No more than communication within the group was expected for the first year or so. NTC was kept informed of progress by the committee members involved in each SIG. It was anticipated that a SIG might stay small but active, grow and become a Division, ally with an existing Division, or die from lack of sustained interest. There are more specific requirements nowadays, but the same ease of startup prevails.

The first decade of its existence, NTC operated as it began, investigating "emerging areas" and forming SIGs. Then, in 1995, NTC member Vijay Stokes conceived and organized the first New Technology Forum (NTF), a special ANTEC symposium on an emerging subject, with invited expert speakers. Since then, 20 NTFs have been presented, with subjects ranging from metallocenes to fuel cells. A number of them have led to the formation of SIGs, such as on packaging and on radiation crosslinking. NTFs and the Fundamental Forums of the Technical Program Committee (TPC) have become showcase sessions at each ANTEC. Development of two to three NTFs each year is currently one of NTC's major activities, to which Committee members Gene Kim, Vassilios Galiatsatos, and Maggie Baumann contribute constantly.

Beginning in 1997, NTC has presented peer-reviewed articles in *Plastics Engineering*. They are a) summaries of NTF topics or b) periodic reviews in such basic areas as design, analysis, materials, and processing. This permits SPE members not attending ANTECs to keep up to date on the latest advances.

Currently, NTC is continuing with the activities described above. In addition, effort is under way to assist TPC in publishing accounts of its Fundamental Forums in *Plastics Engineering*, and to encourage Divisions and SIGs to begin publishing *PE* articles in their specific areas as well.

Over our 21 years of existence, NTC has been fortunate to have had good Chairs and active contributors among our members. The appendices below list 1) NTC members; 2) NTC Chairs, past to present; 3) dates and titles of the NTFs; and 4) dates and titles of the *PE* articles we have published.

—George Schmitt and Vicki Flaris