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Over the last few years, SWST has morphed from a shrinking professional society of mostly North Americans to a global professional society. Still, many of our members, each with only the best of intentions to protect the society, questioned our decision to go “global.” To tell you the truth, even the most strident supporters of the internationalization of SWST were not 100% confident that it would succeed or worse yet it might financially injure SWST. Here is what we knew or believed in our hearts. Perhaps by relating these thought processes, it may in some small way assist us in parlaying our successes into even greater recognition of SWST and continue to promote our ever expanding future Vision, Mission, and Objectives beyond just wood to all bio-based and lignocellulosic sciences and their technologies.

Factors Advancing Internationalization

- 1) Universal Language: Since World War II, English had become the common language of international science.
- 2) Communications: International telecommunication via e-mail, fax, Internet, and social media along with common microcomputer software had arrived and were growing like wildfire.
- 3) North America’s Open-University Education: Universities in the US and Canada had long had an open door policy for both domestic and international students. After 50 yrs of post-World War II education, thousands of former “international” students have matured to prominent positions in worldwide academia, government, and industry. This cadre, along with their students and alumni, represented an as-yet untapped resource of international wood and lignocellulosic science and technology expertise and experts.
- 4) Ease of Modern Travel:
 - a) Access: Internet-based travel information and travel arrangements, the presence of a common language for international travel, and the speed, cost, and availability of travel (within 24-48 hrs you can be most anywhere in the world!),
 - b) International Financial System: With today’s advanced telecommunication and Internet banking, nearly everyone can exchange funds or use ATMs and credit cards most anywhere in the world.
 - c) Ease of International Passport and Visa systems: Today with all the scanned and coded information in our passports and the availability of such to any and all nation’s customs officials, this wealth of information not only protects us, but it also protects our host nations from those who might not be welcomed.
- 5) Need for an International Professional Society: As an individual professional in wood and lignocellulosic science and technology, we lacked a truly international society for all members of the professional community from beginning students to famous scientists. No single professional society was available for all levels of expertise and experience. On a global level, this was all compounded by the fact(s) that many nations faced similar issues with changing forest resources, rapidly evolving industrial processing, and sustainability.

Factors Limiting Internationalization

We must now continue to move forward and recognize issues that still restrict the future of international cooperation and the continued growth of SWST. Issues such as political unrest and terrorism, the ongoing denial by the US of the ISO system of units and our archaic use of “English units,” and a lack of international consensus and support of education and equality are limiting factors.

Most importantly in my opinion, it is now time for SWST to move beyond being perceived by other sciences as a professional society for just “wood.” It is time to embrace the realm of all bio-based and lignocellulosic sciences and the potential of bio-based products to improve our global quality of life and sustainability. If the

technologies fit, then we need to assimilate each and every one of these common technologies (and hopefully as yet undiscovered common technologies) into our “SWST Brand.” Now, finally I ask: Perhaps it is time to change the name of SWST to the International Society of ??? (you fill in the blank).

A new generation of SWST professionals has now heeded “*the call*” to serve our great society. I am sure this next generation of professionals will undoubtedly continue our international growth and advance our prestige.

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