

Pittcon Overview

Orlando 13th - 16th March 2006

Andy Harris, Sub Editor, International Labmate Ltd.

The 57th Pittsburgh Conference on Analytical Chemistry and Applied Spectroscopy, or Pittcon as a simpler version, took place at the Orange County Convention Centre, in Orlando, Florida between 13 and 16th March 2006.

The week was packed with events both inside, and outside the exhibition hall. There were scientific seminars, poster sessions, workshops, short courses, and of course the actual trade show itself. All-in-all it was everything that is to be expected of such an event regarding the enormous laboratory trade.

“THE MAIN TOPIC WAS THE ACTUAL ATTENDANCE AT THE SHOW. ONE MIGHT ASK THE QUESTION: IS PITTCON, NOW PITT-GONE?”

Pittcon Editors Awards

Pittcon 2006 in Orlando, Florida passed without a hitch. There seemed to be a lot of innovation, from the companies that had turned up to show their products. Exhibitors came from around the globe for the 4-day exposition from as far apart as Australia, India, and South Korea to mention a few. There were new ideas all around the world of science including software packages for image analysis and acquisitions, liquid handling capabilities, mass spectrometers, chromatographic columns and devices, the list is endless really. However the editors who voted in the annual awards ceremony had to choose just three nominations from the 1,097 companies on show.

After 90 minutes of heavy discussion and deliberation gold, silver and bronze awards were determined. The Bronze award went to Cerno Bioscience, for their new outlook in mass spectrometry software system “MassWorks”. The Silver award went to Chata Solutions, for an innovatively designed solutions making machine that replicates the making of laboratory solutions, “Chem+Mix” and the eventual Gold award winner was Thermo Electron for a brand new mass spectrometer “Finnigan Orbitrap”, the first new and innovative scientific advancement in the field for 20 years.



What's the future for Pittcon?

There was, however, some discussion on the trade show floor and restaurants/bars that the exhibitors and conferees frequented. The main topic was the actual attendance at the show. One might ask the question: Is Pittcon, now Pitt-Gone?

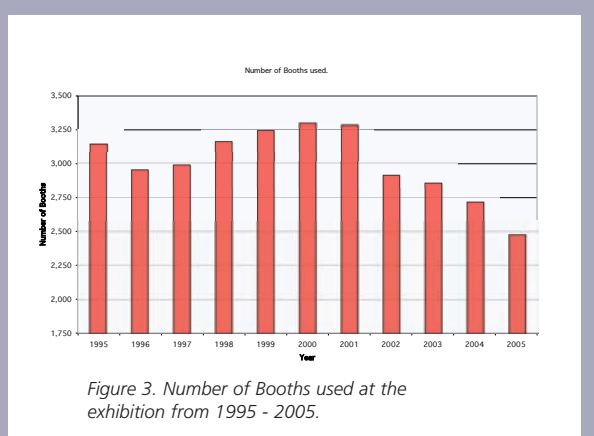
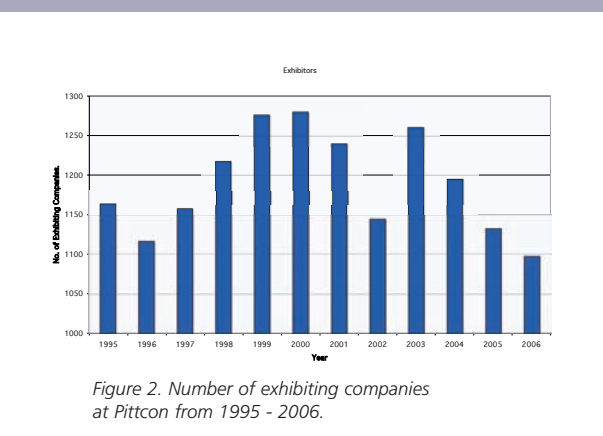
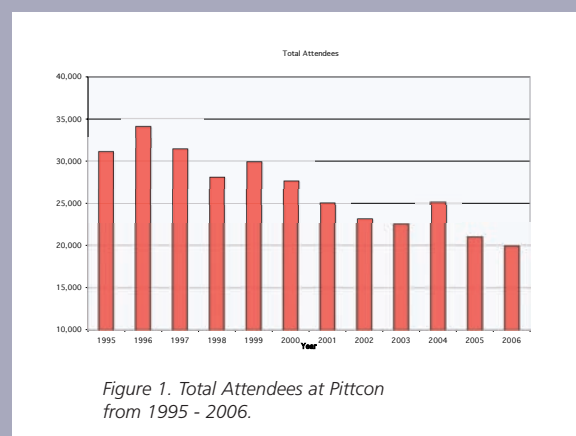
Of course not, but according to the preliminary^[1] statistics of the show, numbers are down from last year in every category: Companies attending (1132 in 2005, 1097 in 2006), Attendees (all people there including: media, students, exhibitors, paying conferees and corporate guest) (20947 in 2005, 19872 in 2006), Floor space used (down by 30,000 sq. feet over the last two year period) and the number of Booths (2714 in 2004 and 2474 in 2005). (At the time of print, no data was available for 2006.)

So what is the reason for this? Is it because the show was in Orlando for the second year running? Maybe, maybe not. Over the years Pittcon has been in the same venue two years in a row and hasn't it affected attendance.

Is it because there are other trade shows, both domestic and international, and competition runs very high? Possibly. The up-and-coming shows in the Far East and Middle East, Arablabs for example, are growing at an average of 30% each year, and 2006 being an Achema and Analytica year (which only happens once every 6 years), and companies are very wary that to cover 3 major shows, on 2 continents is a logistical and costly nightmare, therefore money is better spent across the

board? Is it because companies are acquiring each other and amalgamating product lines, therefore having no need for the number of stands and people at shows? Again, another possibility. Thermo and Qiagen making acquisitions in the last year for example. Lack of money in advertising and travel budgets? Who knows apart from the people who make the decisions on “whether to do Pittcon, or not?”

What we do know though is that this trend has been continuing since the peak in 1996 at Chicago, and the question on everyone's lips is will it continue in Chicago 2007. For it not to, Pittcon may have to change the way it views the consumers, as the consumers themselves change.



[1] Data supplied by Marketing and Communications Dept. at Pittcon. All show data can be viewed at www.pittcon.org in the archive section.