

Postings: from the desk of Jim Brodrick

Even the wintry temperatures here in our nation's capital can't chill my memory of the pleasant weather we had last week in sunny San Diego, at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) eighth annual SSL R&D Workshop. Not that we got much chance to enjoy it, as we were indoors working the whole time, hashing out the major issues in SSL R&D and making key connections. By "we," I don't just mean myself, the other members of the DOE team, and the presenters, but every single person in attendance—350 in all, a fair number of them first-timers at a DOE SSL event.

I was struck by how fully engaged everyone was, not only during the workshop sessions, but also during breaks and lunchtime, even after hours. People were there to learn and to network, and both processes went on constantly, with a great deal of passion. There was a fair amount of cross-fertilization between different segments of the industry, and the ideas were flowing a mile a minute. I overheard numerous deals and collaborations in the making, and was asked "Can you introduce me to so-and-so?" so often that I began to feel like DOE was operating some sort of dating service.

But it wasn't romance that was in the air, but rather a sense that, with all the progress that's been made in SSL over the past few years, we're now truly on the verge of creating a revolution in lighting that brings with it endless possibilities and opportunities—and that this is bigger than any individual person or company and requires each and every one of us to work together. That would explain the spirit of cooperation that permeated all aspects of the workshop, and that had some of the industry's top lighting

manufacturers openly acknowledging the capabilities and contributions of their competitors and sharing information with one another.

As at all DOE SSL workshops, the line between speaker and audience was a blurry one, because everyone had an opportunity to make their point, fill in gaps, or raise questions—and they took ample advantage of it. The result was a workshop that was truly interactive, with speakers sometimes deferring to members of the audience to answer a question or expand on a particular point. A wide breadth of knowledge was represented, as well as many different points of view.

Several presentations focused on DOE-funded R&D projects that are tackling particularly tough challenges with the potential for game-changing results. These were among more than 30 active DOE-funded projects that were on display later at a jam-packed poster session. Sponsored by the Next Generation Lighting Industry Alliance, this session was a huge hit with workshop attendees, who kept the research team representatives busy for quite some time answering questions about multiple aspects of their projects.

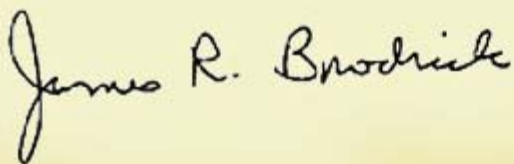
While enthusiasm and excitement were definitely in the air, the tone at the workshop wasn't all pie in the sky, by any means. For example, one speaker, lighting designer Derry Berrigan, recounted a recent project she worked on that illustrated resistance to solid-state lighting from a source that some might consider unlikely. The resistance came not from the client, but rather from the "lighting infrastructure"—the local network of lighting distributors, sales reps, engineers, and contractors who saw her as an outsider trying to "shake up the club" and for various reasons, saw LED products, and the changes they entail, as a threat to their livelihoods. In this case, Derry prevailed in the end, but only because she cared enough about the results and believed enough in solid-state lighting to stick to her guns and fight the good fight.

Two other lighting designers illustrated the point that you can get very good lighting quality with LED products, provided you spend the time and give it the needed focus. Scott Rosenfeld, resident lighting designer at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC, and Michael Souter, who did the lighting design at San Francisco's InterContinental Hotel, each described how they went through a diligent and rigorous selection process before finding LED lighting products that met all of the performance requirements for their applications. But in both cases, the hard work paid off, as the results were more than satisfactory.

There were lots of other presentations at the San Diego workshop, and a summary report will be posted soon on the DOE SSL website, followed by a more detailed report. My heartfelt thanks go to all of you who participated. Your input is much appreciated. Everyone got a chance to dip their oar in the water, and the collective stroke helps shape the updating of DOE's SSL R&D Multi-Year Program Plan and guide DOE's planning for the next round of SSL R&D funding.

A quick look ahead tells me there's only two months before the next big gathering: DOE's third annual SSL Manufacturing R&D Workshop, which takes place in Boston, April 12-13. More details on this upcoming event will be posted soon.

As always, if you have questions or comments, you can reach me at postings@lightingfacts.com.



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