

FACULTY POSITION
Mechanical Behavior of Materials

The Division of Engineering of Brown University announces the opening of a tenured faculty position, available September 1, 1994. The appointment will be made at the level of associate professor or (full) professor depending on the experience and qualifications of the candidate. Applications are sought from candidates who have a PhD or equivalent degree in materials science or a related discipline and research experience at the interface between materials science and solid mechanics. Applicants should be effective teachers of undergraduate and graduate courses in materials science and in the mechanical behavior of materials. The appointee is expected to have a distinguished record in research, having demonstrated an ability to develop research programs and to obtain results of major importance. The position is especially well suited to candidates who can make effective use of the excellent laboratory facilities for mechanical testing and electron microscopy. Interested persons should send a complete resume with the names and addresses of at least five references to: Prof. R. Clifton, Co-Chair, Search Committee, Division of Engineering, Box D, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912. Applications should be received by **March 31, 1994**.

Brown University is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity employer. Women and minorities are strongly encouraged to submit applications.

POSTERMINARIES

Staying Power

Conference planning is fraught with organizational challenges. Take, for example, physical facility foibles like walls transparent to noise, rooms too big or too small and too hot or too cold, lights that won't turn off, and mikes that won't turn on. Or take communications conundra like late meeting announcements, typos in the program, abstracts without authors, registration fees without forms, and outstanding invitations to the most outstanding speakers. One could go on and on, but these problems have all been solved in one way or another through calm methodical or crisis maniacal means.

The answer to one vexing question, however, has eluded even the most clever and thorough organizers. *How does one arrange the program to ensure that the last day, the last session, the very last talk of the meeting draws a respectable audience?*

Many apparently sensible ploys have been tried. Most common among them is the *early ending gambit*. Schedule the last session on the morning of the last day, the rationale being that attendees can then easily make their afternoon flights home without having to miss any talks. The unfortunate result—most attendees leave the night before. Another common scheme is known in the vernacular of news broadcasting simply as the *tease*. Place one or a few important invited talks

on the last day, even in the final session. Some have taken the extreme step of *contributed/invited inversion*, putting invited lectures (not merely the perfunctory but sage conference summary talk) at the final session's end. Usually this results in embarrassment for very prestigious speakers addressing mostly empty rooms. Of course, the red-faced chairpersons add a certain warm glow to the proceedings. Misguided programmers of meetings not large enough to fill a whole week often feel that a Monday through Thursday schedule would guarantee a well-attended Thursday, since it is not until Friday that everyone heads home for the weekend. They soon discover that one day is as good as any other on which to bail out before the end.

It is time for more creative and drastic solutions to this perennial dilemma. We offer a few here, hoping the more courageous organizers among our readers will try them on for size. To escalate the *tease* algorithm, we must appeal to the attendees' baser instincts. Greed or, if you prefer, frugality is a good one. Some kind of reward for staying to the end, collectable only in person after the last talk, is required. *The bribes* might be a free last meal, a free last night in the hotel, a rebate of a significant fraction of the registration fee (which you have, of course, artificially inflated to anticipate this expense), or a free ticket home on the airline of your choice (with frequent flyer bonus miles to boot). This approach may

be more effective on participants feeling the pinch of puny travel budgets than on CEOs of Fortune 500 companies.

If greed doesn't appeal to you and you believe that the whole truth is sometimes a dangerous thing, try the *prevarication ploy*. It's simple. Just ensure that all published programs list a full complement of talks on a variety of important and interesting topics on the last day, but with one minor additional precaution. Don't invite anyone to speak at or to chair those sessions. In fact, you can use entirely fictitious names and titles throughout. Most participants who don't stay for the last day will never know the difference and still experience the emotional rush attendant to early departure. For the true-blue dedicated stalwarts who show up on the chimerical last day, offering an exotic excursion to a nearby attraction would serve to assuage the annoyance for most. We have not thought through the ramifications of this procedure, once tried, on the attendance pattern at the next meeting you run.

If you are saddled with an exaggerated sense of personal integrity and fair play, the *phoney day deception* is not for you. The last, and perhaps best, solution is borrowed from the criminal justice system. It is in its least threatening incarnation, sequestration. At the other extreme, it bears some resemblance to *incarceration*. We are not referring to the well-known Gordon Research Conferences—they are linked to civilization throughout the week. We mean "do whatever it takes to control egress." Eliminate private cars (or the roads they would use); lock up the keys to the buses; anchor the boats far from the pier; tell the local taxi service that the meeting venue is under quarantine (think up some really nasty plague-like disease); disconnect phones; lock outside doors; and buy those newfangled meeting room chairs that not only can be latched to each other but come equipped with leg irons. This alternative offers the added benefit of hanging on to the most luminous invited speakers, who usually arrive and leave within microseconds of the beginning and end of their talks. They may now interact with other conference inmates.

It is unlikely that MRS will adopt any of these ideas until they have been tested and proven elsewhere. Let us know if your experiments confirm our theories—and meanwhile—our hearts go out to all those nonfictitious speakers who discover their names printed at 4:30 on Friday afternoon just above the word "adjourn."

E.N. KAUFMANN