

Magnetics Industry Overview *by* **Walt Benecki**

A Revitalized International Magnetics Association Makes Changes

The International Magnetics Association (IMA) is the worldwide trade association representing manufacturers of magnetic materials, distributors and fabricators, suppliers to the magnetics industry and others with an interest in magnetics. The IMA, formerly operated as the Magnetic Materials Producers Association (MMPA), was originally founded in 1959. In November of 2001 the IMA replaced MMPA, expanding its scope and operations in recognition of the global nature of the magnetics industry. In 2004, the Magnetic Distributors and Fabricators Association (MDFA) merged with the IMA.

The mission of the International Magnetics Association is to promote the worldwide growth, development, understanding and use of magnetic materials and devices.

IMA currently has three major divisions: Permanent Magnets, Soft Magnetic Materials and Distributors and Fabricators. Because of the extremely broad diversity of the Association's membership, this division structure is a critical element that permits groups of members with common interest to establish programs that meet their individual needs. The charter of the organization is flexible and permits additional divisions to be established if desired by the membership.

IMA currently schedules one major spring meeting, however individual divisions have the flexibility to schedule additional meetings as they deem necessary. During the year, much association business is conducted utilizing teleconference technology to conserve member's time and money.

The greatest challenge that IMA has faced during the past few years has been declining membership. Factors influencing this membership decline have been plant closures, industry consolidation and the migration of certain markets to Asia.

At its spring meeting in May, 2005, the membership of IMA approved a recommendation of the Board of Directors to implement significant changes to increase the value of IMA membership for current as well as new members.

Some of the advantages of the new IMA include a significantly lower annual dues structure, member discounts for Webcom Communications and WebMagnetics services, and an expanded Spring Meeting format to provide both increased member education and enhanced networking opportunities. In addition, qualification for IMA membership has been expanded to include all industry suppliers, universities, individuals, related associations and all users of magnetic materials components and assemblies.

The change in dues structure is significant and results in a 30-80% reduction for existing and prospective members. This adjustment, coupled with the addition of numerous association benefits, will provide substantially greater value to all IMA member companies.

In addition to the enhancements summarized above, IMA has a number of existing programs that benefit its members and the magnetics community in general. These programs include:

Implementation of Industry Standards

IMA develops, maintains, and distributes industry standards. These are regularly reviewed and revised by Technical Committees within each Division to reflect current industry technology and terminology. The institution of new or revised standards is determined by Divisional membership.

Industry and Association Liaison and User Education

IMA is active in presenting seminars and workshops in conjunction with groups such as the Electrical Manufacturing and Coil Winding Association (EMCWA), the Applied Power Electronics Conference (APEC) and Magnetics Magazine (Webcom Communications). These forums provide additional opportunities to influence world-wide standards and present general information and educational opportunities on magnetics and their applications. Topics range from the fundamentals of magnets and soft ferrites to magnetizing, measuring, stabilizing and optimizing techniques.

Promoting Higher Education in Magnetic Technology

The IMA Scholars Program was implemented in 1994 to support university-level study in the field of magnetics and encourage engineering and materials science students to consider the magnetics industry for employment and career advancement.

Statistical Reporting

The IMA conducts statistical surveys to gather market information on various materials or components. Each IMA division is responsible for the design and implementation of their specific statistical programs. Statistical reports are only available to participating IMA member companies.

Benchmarking Programs

Benchmark programs permit members to compare their key business indicators against composite industry averages. Only Benchmarking Program participants receive composite report information.

It is important to note that all statistical and benchmarking programs are administered by an independent accounting firm to assure absolute confidentiality of individual company information.

The main long-term challenge for IMA is to achieve true international status. Increasing membership value and encouraging participation by a more expansive group of industry participants are mainstays in achieving the long-term objective of international influence for IMA.

Whatever your relationship to the magnetics industry, IMA membership now offers a unique opportunity to network with a broad range of industry management and technical experts. Anyone considering membership in the new IMA can learn more about the Association and obtain a membership application at their web site (www.intl-magnetics.org) or contact IMA headquarters at (312) 456-5590.

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