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Foreword

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Foreword

Scientists must always be ready to acknowledge that they are smarter today than they were yesterday. It is a part of the job; it's also what makes science so enjoyable. The papers from the Fourth Annual International Symposium on Adhesives and Adhesion for Structural Materials held at Washington State University, Pullman, Washington in September 1984, and presented here, will open more than a few eyes. First, there is a fresh look at the use of processed lignins for wood binders. Second is a new and rather startling approach to considering urea-formaldehyde resins.

Urea-formaldehyde (UF) condensates are some of the oldest synthetic resins known. As a class of polymers, UFs have been about as well studied as any. More tons of UFs are produced annually than any other type of adhesive. UF behavior, except for a few inconsistencies, was thought to be well understood. During the 1983 Adhesion/Adhesives Symposium, Thomas Pratt presented a paper which suggested that UF resins were more like colloids than true condensates. His work opened up a whole new aspect in UF technology, and is being reported here for the first time. The ideas presented in papers by Rammon, Koutsky, and Dunker and their co-workers may or may not be 100% right; on the other hand, they are not 100% wrong either. A perusal of the papers shows that the implications of these new ideas are mind-stunning. Perhaps as adhesive technologists we should spend a little more time looking at physical qualities rather than just chemical reactions.

More than a little new information about UF systems was presented at the Adhesion/Adhesives Symposium in the 1984 Symposium. A lot of us will have to do some hard thinking about things we've held rather sacred for a good share of our professional lives. But then that's what makes being a scientist so enjoyable.

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