

## ConturELN secures research continuity at Johnson Matthey

Record quality, search-ability and keeping relevant data in one repository are important factors for an R&D intensive company such as Johnson Matthey. At the group's main centre for long-term research, the Johnson Matthey Technology Centre, more than 120 scientists now rely on ConturELN as their main research documentation tool.

Johnson Matthey is a speciality Chemicals Company focused on its core skills in catalysts, precious metals and fine chemicals. The company has operations in over 30 countries and employs around 7,700 people.

At the group's main research centre, the Johnson Matthey Technology Centre (JMTC), research covers a wide range of disciplines. In addition to projects directly sponsored by the operating divisions to meet their long-term objectives, JMTC also runs a set of core science projects in the fields of catalyst engineering, modeling, preparation and characterization.

JMTC has state of the art facilities for preparing and testing catalysts and other products as well as a world class analytical science group, equipped with the latest tools to characterize and understand the materials with which Johnson Matthey works.

Laboratory work had previously been documented in traditional paper notebooks that were signed and counter-signed for legal purposes. Standard computer data bases and graph plotting software were used and outputs were printed and glued into paper notebooks.

Such a system has inherently poor search-ability and relevant data cannot be grouped together. Also, if people left the company it could be difficult to access their work and maintain continuity. In late 2004 Johnson Matthey started to look into the possibility of implementing an electronic lab notebook system that would help solve these issues.

– We were looking for a more efficient way of managing experimental records that could be used to support patent applications, and that was as easy to use as a paper notebook, says Dr. Jonathan Sharman, one of the Research Managers at JMTC.

The wish list for such a system was long. It had to be user-friendly, easily searchable, allow links to electronically stored graphs and photographs, allow information sharing and maintain or improve productivity. It should also be a secure system providing robust proof of dates of invention or discovery.

Other technologies were examined in the process but ultimately ConturELN was chosen.

**– Our expectations of the system before the implementation was increased speed and quality of recording experiments. The speed depends on the application and the use of templates, but the record quality has improved dramatically, says Jonathan Sharman.**

The other important improvements after the implementation have been search-ability and keeping all data in one place. Even though small time savings are made for non-routine work Dr. Sharman expects major time-savings and productivity gains in the longer term especially with searching, referring to previous work and sharing of procedures.

Feedback from the users has been very positive. ConturELN is found very useful, especially the possibility to look at the work of others. Furthermore, the system was thought to be self-explanatory and easy to learn and use. One of the most appreciated features is the template feature, mainly used for routine experiments. Due to the nature of people's research cloning is often preferred.

– With ConturELN it is easy to organize data better and to maintain clear and ordered records, says Sarah Hudson, Fuel Cell Research Scientist & ELN Coordinator. It is also easier to search both my own and other's work and to share records with colleagues.

Contur ELN is integrated into the existing IT infrastructure and managed using the same network as before. It is compatible with the standard Microsoft/ Chemical drawing packages that JMTC previously used.

As minimal training was required for users with existing computing skills it was very easy to get started. Installation, configuration and training were conducted by Contur in only four days.