Julius Kruttschnitt Mineral Research Centre

<<back to News Archive

'Thumbs up' for world's longest project

The world's longest running mineral processing research project, known as 'P9', has received a significant 'thumbs up' from leading North American mining and service companies following a recent six-monthly sponsor's review meeting in Australia.

P9 started in 1962 as a University of Queensland-based mill control project, brokered through the Australian Mineral Industries Research Association (AMIRA). These days the project deals mainly with optimising existing mineral processing plants and designing new ones.

The work is led from Brisbane, Australia, by the Julius Kruttschnitt Mineral Research Centre, with support from the University of Cape Town in South Africa and McGill University in Montreal.

ME International reps, from left, Art Reith and Andrew Crook, meet UCT's Professor Cyril O'Connor at the recent P9M review meeting held at the JKMRC in Brisbane, Australia.

JKMRC Project Leader Professor J-P Franzidis said a tour of Canada and the USA late in 1999 led to a sponsorship base of seven North American companies, including Inco, Noranda, Cominco, Phelps Dodge, ME International, Cleveland Cliffs and Baker Process, bringing the total number of P9 sponsoring companies to 38 world-wide.

Accompanying Professor Franzidis on the tour was AMIRA International P9 Project Coordinator Mr David Stribley.

"Most of the people we spoke to in North America, other than our existing sponsors, weren't aware of P9 and what it was doing," Professor Franzidis said.

Growing Canadian and USA support for the project has coincided with the announcement of formal research collaboration with

McGill University in Montreal.

"The McGill mineral processing team brings a wealth of experience in flotation to the project," Professor Franzidis said.

ME International Inc International Sales vice-president, Mr Art Reith, said his company joined P9 after assessing their current technical capabilities in semi-autogenous (SAG) milling.

"SAG milling has moved into more complex applications compared to previous ball mill operations," Mr Reith said. "It's essential that we became familiar with global developments in mill processing so as to design and produce mill liner products to meet current and future requirements from operators, metallurgists and maintenance people."

Mr Reith said JKMRC research conducted through P9 was relevant to ME International's business objectives.

In terms of why other North American mining or supply companies would come to the project, Mr Reith says P9 could easily become a defacto extension of their own technical departments.

He said the globalisation of the mining industry and a trend towards outsourcing R & D made it easier for US-based companies to join transnational research projects such as P9.

"Most major mining companies operating in the US would also operate outside, such as Phelps Dodge who are significant within America, but also have operations in Chile."

Phelps Dodge Technology vice-president Mr John Marsden said many processors in the US or Canada who stood to benefit from the project may not be aware of its existence.

He said P9 presented a number of areas of interest to Phelps Dodge, particularly fine grinding in the project's comminution (rock breakage) module.

The JKMRC's work in flotation and liberation modelling using JKSimFloat, a software simulation package developed from the P9 project, is seen as an essential tool for the industry, Mr Marsden said.

"Phelps Dodge has had a connection with the JKMRC for quite some time through the use of their JKSimMet software in a number of our operations, but we've now decided to join the project.

"We've been through a down cycle in our copper business as we've been building up our technology group and R & D activity over the past three years, which makes this an appropriate time to be supporting this effort."

Professor Franzidis said he hoped that other American companies would follow Phelps Dodge and ME International in joining the P9 project.

For more information about P9 contact:

- Julius Kruttschnitt Mineral Research Centre, P9 Project Leader, Prof J-P Franzidis, ph +61 7 3365 5888, fax +61 7 3365 5999, email: j.franzidis@mailbox.uq.edu.au
- AMIRA International, P9 Project Coordinator, Mr David Stribley, ph +61 3 96799976, fax +61 3 96799900, email: stribley@amira.com.au
- McGill University, Professor Jim Finch, ph +1 514 398 1040, fax +1 514 398 4492, email: jfinch@po-box.mcgill.ca
- University of Cape Town, Prof Cyril O'Connor, ph +27 21 650 2701, fax +27 21 650 3782, email: ctoc@chemeng.uct.ac.za

For media inquiries contact:

David Goeldner, Communications Coordinator, Julius Kruttschnitt Mineral Research Centre, ph +61 7 3365 5848, fax + 61 7 3365 5999, email: d.goeldner@mailbox.uq.edu.au

Story released 14 July, 2000