Photonics West 2008: Again the Biggest Event in Photonics

Photonics West 2008: Again the Biggest Event in Photonics - As every year, the photonics community met in San Jose in the heart of the Silicon Valley for their first big meeting in the year, the Photonics West. An international crowd of 17,570 heard nearly 3,200 presentations in 85 conferences and networked with almost 1,200 exhibitors during the event. Orientation within the huge number of conferences can be a challenge, therefore it is split into four main conferences: BIOS, LASE, OPTO and MOEMS/MEMS. Also, the exhibition is separated; the small BIOS exhibition started with about 150 exhibitors on Saturday, 19. January. The main exhibition is consequently named Photonics West -Exhibition and went from January 22 to 24. With about 1,200 exhibitors, this trade show is probably the biggest photonics show in 2008, just topped by the Laser Fair in Munich, which is held every other year.

Biophotonics on the Rise

While the BIOS exhibition remains rather small, the conference has grown to the biggest event among the Photonics West conferences. BiOS 2008 Symposium Chairs James Fujimoto, MIT (USA), and R. Rox Anderson, Wellman Center for Photomedicine, Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard School of Medicine (USA), have assembled a program that is 1,300 papers strong. It starts usually 2 days before the main conference and attracts the community of biomedical imaging and laser-based therapeutics. The conference grew again and several sub-conferences had to be moved to larger halls during the day. Most interesting (and the most attended) event was the Hot Topic session Saturday evening. Bruce Tromberg, Beckman -Laser Institute and Medical Clinic, UC -Irvine, and Lihong Wang, Washington University in St. Louis, showed impressive positive impacts on the success of chemotherapy as a result of enhanced data gathered during treatment by diffuse optical imaging at Beckman and by photoacoustic tomography and microscopy at Washington University. Paul French, Imperial College, talked about work in fluorescence lifetime imaging that has been revolutionized by the supercontinuum source technology.
Big, Bigger - Photonics West

When the other conferences started on Monday, the halls became more crowded, but that was nothing compared to the start of the exhibition on Tuesday.

Even visitors with a long experience at Photonics West were surprised about the number of visitors from the very first moment. After the first day Dr. Thomas Renner from Toptica said "It was busy from the start. I had not even time for a glass of water - the customers were waiting". Other exhibitors also confirmed the high quality of requests.

The Photonics West Exhibition historically serves the laser community, but that has completely diversified. Today, the products and services offered at Photonics West range from biomedical imaging (almost all exhibitors from BIOS remained at their places) and scientific laser equipment to laser diodes, cameras, optical components and larger laser equipment - to name just a few. Small and medium companies dominate, while large names from Europe and the USA have to be there as well.

The Future: 2010 in San Francisco!

This year, Photonics West Reached its limits. Although the organizers had already built a huge tent for several hundred exhibitors behind the main hall, they had to add a second tent on there. And still, exhibitor's requests for more space were not satisfied. And also visitors were faced with limitation: hotel rooms in the city center were fully booked months in advance and the prices for parking lots close to the convention center went up to 30 or even 40 $ per day.

On that point it was somehow a relief for all the exhibitors and visitors when SPIE announced that the whole event will move in January 2010 to the Moscone Center in downtown San Francisco. Parking prices may be incredible there as well, but the easy access through San Francisco International Airport and the beautiful town of
San Francisco will convince many new visitors and the growth of the world’s biggest Photonics event may continue.

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