

Representing The Wiping Materials, Recycled Clothing, New Textile By Products and Fiber Industries

In My Opinion



Statistics Are Smart

By Bill Schapiro, Whitehouse & Schapiro, Baltimore, MD

SMART Immediate Past President

When I was in college, I briefly toyed with the idea of being a clinical psychologist. One of the factors which deterred me was that I

didn't like the statistics courses involved in reaching a PhD degree. So it was a bit ironic when vice president Larry Groipen, who has spearheaded our very effective strategic planning program, asked me to tackle one of our "critical goal categories": Devote necessary resources to data gathering and analysis.

Even more surprising is that I enjoyed the task and rediscovered a very important resource for SMART, Dr. Jena Hawley, PhD, professor and department head, apparel, textiles & interior design at Kansas State University. In the early 2000s Dr. Hawley served on the Council for Textile Recycling, the educational foundation that was active for SMART in the mid 1990s. Her scholarship focuses on systems analysis of textile recycling, she has conducted extensive research on textile recycling and has also published several articles on the topic.

Dr. Hawley was enthusiastic about reconnecting with SMART and within days, SMART's board voted to spend the very reasonable sum of \$3,096 for Dr. Hawley to oversee PhD candidate Cosette Armstrong, who in early July spent two weeks collecting data from the nation's most comprehensive textile industry library at North Carolina State University. The two researchers are compiling and analyzing the figures as this column goes to press. They are analyzing such key statistics as the: Number of companies in the US textile recycling industry; Annual number of pounds of reverted post-consumer textiles that recyclers keep from the solid waste stream; number of pounds exported; number of employees our industry employs; and much more pertinent information.

Another wonderful opportunity coming our way is that Kansas State will use its own funds, through its own sustainability lab, to conduct a revised and updated SMART member profile survey that was previously done in 2006. In this way, we will know our current membership composition and how we meet the needs of our members.

There is even more: Dr. Hawley has the idea for Kansas State to sponsor a nationwide scholarship contest to reward the student with the best idea for the use of the 5% or so of recycled textiles which are currently being sent to landfills by our industry for lack of applicable markets. The publicity of this contest alone would be beneficial to our industry, not to mention the economic benefit of new markets for our by-products.

What we know from strategic planning is that one of our main goals is to be known by government agencies as "recyclers" so that we qualify for tax benefits, generic marketing and sales, and set asides for recycled textiles. By providing updated statistics about the very significant benefits our members provide for our environment and our economy, SMART will make a great step forward in reaching this goal.

The rediscovery of SMART's relationship with Kansas State and Dr. Hawley is a special gift that strategic planning has given to our members.

ARTICLE NOTES:

- 1) For a short video on Dr. Hawley and her research on textile recycling go to: <http://syndicate.missouri.edu/tags/recycling>
- 2). Follow the link below for Dr. Hawley's article on the Economic Impact of Textile and Clothing Recycling

<http://www.magnetmail.net/images/clients/KingString/attach/SMARTJanaHawleyREV.pdf>
- 3) Follow the link below for a sample from the book Sustainable Textiles: Life Cycle and the Environmental Impact

<http://www.magnetmail.net/images/clients/KingString/attach/SMARTSustainableTextilesLifeCycleandSample.pdf>
- 4) Follow the link below for Dr. Hawley's article: Digging for Diamonds: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Reclaimed Textile Products

<http://www.magnetmail.net/images/clients/KingString/attach/SMARTDiggingforDiamondsAConceptualFramework.pdf>
- 5) Follow the link below for Dr. Hawley's article: Textile Recycling: A System Perspective

<http://www.magnetmail.net/images/clients/KingString/attach/SMARTEXILERECYLINGASYSTEMPERSPECTIVE.pdf>
- 6) Thank you to our marketing director and former SMART consultant, Dr. Hugh Aberman, himself a former psychology professor and researcher for helping me with this project and rediscovering and enlisting Dr. Hawley for our research effort.