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Sci-Tech Library Utilized by Ceramic Information Center

Aimee Zerla
Molly Brinkman

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SCI-TECH LIBRARY UTILIZED BY CERAMIC INFORMATION CENTER
By Aimée F. Zerla and Molly Brinkman

Underwater, under foot, in the air and beyond, ceramics stand the test of time. From your home to multi-million dollar manufacturing plants, ceramics have made great strides into practically every technology used by man. Although the industry continues to advance, information and data regarding ceramics are not always easy to find. The American Ceramic Society founded the Ceramic Information Center (CIC) to provide people with customized access to the ever-evolving world of ceramics. With the overwhelming amount of technical advances, the CIC is a reference service designed to give a person the precise information needed.

For many people, ceramics means a coffee cup, plate, tile, or a hobby. However, the ceramic industry has evolved into a worldwide, multi-billion dollar business by combining raw materials such as sand and clay or using chemically processed materials and fabricating them into products like glass, engine components, replacement parts for the body, and much more. With ceramics becoming an integral part of business and industry, there are many who have questions regarding the material. CIC professionals can help with information requests that are technical, bibliographical, commercial, or general. Questions range from facts and figures on materials and production to product development and applications. If a person needs facts or figures about materials, production, product development, or applications, the CIC is just a phone call away.

Greg Geiger, ceramic engineer, and Tom Shreves, librarian/CIC information specialist, are the CIC staff who work as a team to fulfill information requests. “We can perform all or any part of an information search and retrieval,” said Chris Schnitzer, CIC product manager. “The value of our service lies in our in-depth knowledge of ceramic materials and applications. This knowledge produces information searches which are relevant, focused, accurate, cost-efficient, and fast.”

The innovative center offers a range of services for those requesting ceramic-related information. Two of CIC’s most popular services are the Ceramic Search Service and the Document Delivery Service. The Ceramic Search provides access to information using various electronic databases, unpublished papers, ACerS members and copyrighted materials, while the Document Delivery Service provides specific articles, patents, books or periodicals using the vast James I. Mueller Memorial Library holdings or via external exchange programs.

The James I. Mueller Memorial Library, established in 1954 and located at The American Ceramic Society.
Headquarters, supports the CIC with an international periodical collection of more than 900 titles, more than 7,500 book titles and more than 550 reference and resource books. In addition, the library has product and corporate literature, U.S. Government reports, and many unpublished articles covering a range of advanced and traditional ceramic and glass-related topics. "We're strictly concentrated on ceramics as opposed to other libraries that would provide ceramic information in a broader perspective," said Shreves. "There is a wealth of information in the range and depth of our collection. Since the Society is a publisher of information, it provides us with an advantage in acquisitions. Our materials range from the turn of the century to the present."

The CIC also uses several internal and external electronic databases, such as Ceramic Abstracts, ceramicSource®, Phase Equilibria Diagrams for Ceramists, Ceramic Materials Database, and Ceramic Experts (ceramic consultants and topical experts) to gather information. According to Shreves, the most critical stage of a ceramic information search is the interpretation of the client's request. Clients often do not realize how much information is available. So they generally do not ask detailed questions, settling for less than they really need.

In order to help clients receive the information they want, the CIC uses a reference interview for each request. The interview involves the client and both Shreves and Geiger. The combination of Shreves's searching experience and Geiger's engineering background assures the client a well-focused effort. Shreves has a bachelor's degree in geography and work completed toward a master's degree in library information science. Geiger has a bachelor's degree in ceramic engineering and an associate's degree in ceramic technology with an emphasis on manufacturing.

"We are interested in how a customer wants to use the requested information," Geiger said. "This helps keep our search focused so the customer receives the information they need. It also helps us think of additional information that may be helpful to the client such as company-specific product literature or consultants from our "ceramic experts."

On the horizon are new products or processes that will be aided by, or created with, ceramics. From a treatment to combat liver cancer to a cleaner and safer environment, ceramics are promising to provide new ways to rethink technology, and the CIC will be there to bring the most up-to-date information to those who are looking for it."

Aimée F. Zerla is promotions coordinator and Molly Brinkman is manager of promotions for The American Ceramic Society, located at 735 Ceramic Place, Westerville, OH 43081-8720, 614/890-4700. The American Ceramic Society (ACerS) is an international association dedicated to the dissemination of technical, scientific, commercial and educational information about ceramics. ACerS serves its 13,000 members offering publications, technical meetings, educational opportunities and information and employment services.
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